

IN THE LAND  
of EXTREMES

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# IN THE LAND OF EXTREMES

BY

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*To my dear father, who developed my love for books,  
this work is lovingly dedicated.*

*THE AUTHOR.*



## AUTHOR'S NOTE.

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**H**OLD that no person should impose his thoughts upon the public unless he feels that the message which he has to deliver is one that the public needs.

Authors are surely born and not made. The born writer feels the love of the pen stirring within his being during the days of childhood; with the pen he finds the one mode of expression which satisfies his inner being and soul. Such is the writer's excuse for presenting the following pages.

The author of this work simply wishes to give to the public a truer idea of life as it is to-day, "in her country;" wishes to correct false impressions which the recent writings of certain well-known knights of the quill have planted in the minds of the people concerning Arizona. No doubt some of these stories have been true of a past period, but even such portray only camp, ranch or mining life, and this is by no means the whole of life in "my country." Arizona has well been called "a lotus land of charm." Those who have lived or visited within her borders have felt this charm, but few have been able to express or analyze it. This charm is something vague, elusive, mystic.

Arizona is utterly different from any other part of the United States. You can find some State to compare

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with every other State in the Union, with the single exception of Arizona. It is a world by itself and is governed by altogether different influences from those that prevail in the average commonwealth. It is said to resemble Palestine, and the San Pedro river is heralded as a duplicate of the historic river Jordan.

I say that no person should attempt to portray life in any country unless he loves that country, and I think it would be better if he had been in that country once, at least, though he placed but one foot across the border. I have in mind certain "famous" stories which have been written about Arizona recently. Any citizen of Arizona who reads these stories will know that the authors of the same did not know life in Arizona, though they may have lived there. Nothing could be more untrue of life in "my country" than some of these narratives. The tales themselves are clever enough, once you dig down beneath the filth of dialect which those authors seem to think represents the vernacular of Arizona. I admire the authors of those stories in a way; they must have been as difficult to write as they are to read. I may be doing injustice to the authors of some of these Arizona stories, but if I trusted to my judgment to guide me, I should aver that the Bowery in New York is as near to Arizona as they have ever been. They must have gathered their slang from the "East Side," if indeed they gathered it from any place at all. Such authors should be classed with the long line of "Nature fakirs," whom President Roosevelt has pointed out.

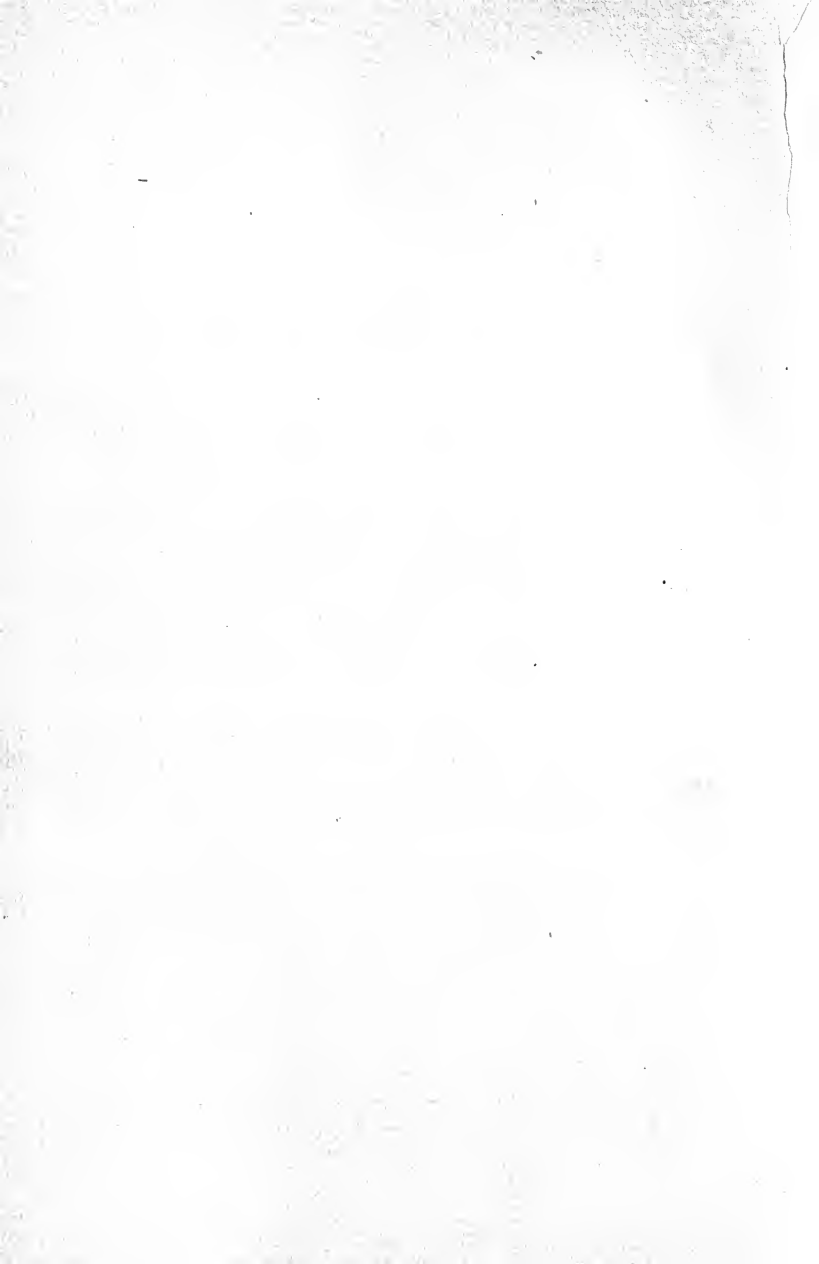
Many of the people of Arizona use slang and much good live slang is born among us, but there is no Arizona slang of the sort that has appeared in some books.

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The author of this story is not a native of Arizona. It is her land by adoption; however, she is insulted when it is misrepresented or abused. She has lived in many different parts of Arizona for many years and has studied its life closely, but she has never heard such language used in any section of the Territory by any class of people as these authors put into the mouths of Arizona people. It is nauseating to intelligence.

Great tragedies of the heart take place in this land of extremes, and most of the incidents related in the following pages transpired in Arizona, and came to the knowledge of the writer.

The pen and the sword are closely allied, and perhaps this is why I rise up in arms to defend "my country."





## Part I.—Experience

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### CHAPTER I.

It was not so many years ago that Fate commenced playing the contrary tricks of which I am to write. It all occurred in that land of extremes, where wastes are wide and waterless, where river valleys are verdant, and where the shimmering sun shines as resplendently in February as in August. In other words, it all happened in Arizona.

I am glad it was in those days when the young girl heroine was yet a favorite, for I fear I could not write eulogies concerning a saucy widow or about the unhappy married women who are so popular in the fiction of the present.

The crowd of aimless loungers about the Prescott depot, who were watching the morning train pull in from Phoenix, opened their eyes with interest as a girl came from a Pullman coach, and, after looking about uncertainly, entered the 'bus for the Burk Hotel. The porter, who always came to meet the trains as runner, looked at the driver and winked, nodding his head in the direction of the girl. The driver answered this indication by shutting one eye in a ridiculous squint and drawing in

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a long breath. But before the 'bus drove away from the platform, several impertinent fellows, Fred Harmon for one, perched themselves within the vehicle opposite the interesting stranger, with no better purpose than to be able to stare at the newcomer. Both porter and driver made efforts to show off "smart," but the girl was not minding these fellows. She was looking over the ramshackle array of wooden structures, for such was Prescott in those days, before the big fire, which laid the town in a bed of ashes, and out of which has sprung a beautiful city of stone.

This girl was looking with interested eyes; being like all other young creatures who set out alone for the first time in the wide, wide world, she was expecting only good and profitable happenings to come her way. There was no foreshadow of aught that was harmful or evil in her thought. As yet she had proven nothing to her own satisfaction of this world and all its tangles; life lay before her an untried experiment. But she was eager to investigate all things. For this purpose she had come West, like other restless seekers, after a change. As yet her mind was without any definite purpose. She was eager to meet whatever came her way in the line of experience. In after years, no doubt, when her life should have developed into a firm purpose, she would look back upon this first journey when her soul sang, "Westward, ho!" and shudder at the risks she ran. To-day her innocence of all pitfalls was her safeguard. She was dwelling in the sunshine of perpetual expectation, and was looking about the town eagerly. It all seemed strange and unknown to her, but so interesting. Perhaps she would

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spy a mounted cowboy and fall in love with him at first sight. This was the event she wished for, from the first day she set her foot in the Territory, having just read the "Virginian." How she longed for this, but somehow it would not happen, and yet she had seen a number of cowboys, mounted and otherwise. But this was almost what she had come West for. Alas, the things we "cut and dry" in our prognostications are seldom if ever the things which transpire; it is the unexpected that always happens.

While the 'bus moved along the street, the girl searched the town with her eyes, trying to adjust her thoughts to the new condition, but all the while she was conscious of some compelling influence hovering near, that pulled her musings in a direction opposite that of her own volition. In an attempt to master this, she found herself looking into the eyes of Fred Harmon.

When at length the girl was helped from the 'bus by a willing but awkward fellow, and had entered the office of the hotel, there was a perceptible stir among all present. The clerk at the desk was politeness personified as he swung the register around and gave her the pen, and when she had affixed her dainty signature to the page, he curtly dismissed the bell boy, and himself conducted her to one of the best rooms in the house.

"Who is the young lady in number six," asked the night clerk as he reported for duty at the usual hour.

"Don't know any more than this, Kelly," answered the day clerk, placing his finger on the page before him—"Registers from Nova Scotia, name is Myrnie Leston, takes the room for a month."

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"From Nova Scotia? Wonder if she wishes she was in Halifax now?"

"Can't say. She's sure in Arizona now. Seen her, Kelly?"

"Yes, saw her getting a drink at the end of the hall. Went past her a time or two and was planning to give her some kind of information about the house, but she hurried into her room and would not look at me. There she is now, coming down for supper. Gee Whiz! Look, Joe Mower, good sight for sore eyes."

Fred Harmon was sitting in a secluded corner of the lobby, but he, too, saw the girl coming consciously down the stairway, and at once sitting straight in his chair, he stared hard, but when her eyes met his, drawn as they were by his direct gaze, he was compelled to look away. When she had passed into the dining room, he walked leisurely over to the desk, and looked over the day's arrivals again for about the sixth time that day. A certain name scrawled slenderly upon the page was attractive to him. He next went to a window and looked outside; with his hands in his pockets, he whistled a slow love tune; then, as though he had nothing better to do, he sauntered into the dining room, and so "happened" to seat himself as to have a front view of the face which at that minute seemed the one object of attraction to the whole roomful of guests. The reason for this was obvious. Myrnie Leston was not of ordinary appearance. She was a beauty of rare type, and wherever did a pretty girl exist who did not attract attention?

Miss Leston paid no heed to people's staring. She had been stared at ever since leaving Nova Scotia, and thought it only the rudeness of Western people. Her

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wonderful mass of hair was brown, and yet when the sun shone on it, as it did now through an open window, it was all dotted and lighted up with gold. And her eyes, perhaps some thought they were black. No, they were violet, and violet of the deepest hue. The long lashes which fringed them in were much darker than her hair, and this is what made her bright eyes appear black in certain lights. But when her dress was blue, as it now was, her eyes were liquid and clear and sparkling in violet depths, brighter than heaven's own stars. A complexion of almost unknown fairness, cheeks as pink as roses, and lips like the ripest cherries; these were some of the things which made people stare. She was of medium height, round and graceful, but gave the impression of being smaller than she really was, so perfectly was she moulded. Her bust being a little large, she had tried to crowd it into a tight corset cover, but without much success, and flat-chested women made jeering remarks (envious things) while the men stared in open admiration. A small waist-line and fine hips were set off by the daintiest, high-instepped feet. But I wish you could have seen her neck. It is seldom one finds the perfect neck. Her's was round and white and smooth and long enough to curve gracefully. A tiny chestnut curl or two fell down from the hair behind. Her ears were noticeable in their delicate perfection, being like little pink shells protruding from her ringlets. One feature of her face, however, slightly marred its perfection. This was the high, broad forehead. It was an exceedingly fine forehead, intellectually considered, but for a girl of her type seemed hardly befitting; still, when the fluffy hair was

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dressed low in front, the overprominent effect of the forehead was quite eliminated.

It may seem incredible that this girl was unaware of her extraordinary charm, but such was the truth. She was yet young, and had not discovered her beauty, for she had never been allowed to spend much time or thought on personal appearance; instead, the sternest of morals and strict habits of industry were drilled into her. Then, too, she had been reared in Nova Scotia, where beautiful women are as plentiful as flowers in California. In Arizona, where girls even of a plain type are scarce, a beauty attracts as promptly as a magnet placed into a group of tacks.

Several times during this meal Fred Harmon's eyes met the girl's, but it was always she who looked away. Once his admiration was so apparent that she blushed a little, looking down into her plate. This sent little electrical shocks tingling through the man's every vein. But the blush came and went quickly, as did the army of little dimples which played in circles about her mouth, like little whirlpools on a tiny lake. She knew that she had blushed, and this knowledge sent defiance through her every fiber, and she looked at the gentleman before her spitefully and tried to decide that she disliked him very much.

After the meal she wandered aimlessly through the halls, looking out this window and that. Again a feeling of rebellion and repugnance went through her as she felt that same strange despotic will taunting her. Looking up she saw Fred Harmon observing her from a dim corner of the hall. Promptly she went into her room and slammed the door.

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Myrnie was not long a stranger in this Western town, where convention and formality are dispensed with as much as possible. Joe Mower and Kelly were among the first to make themselves known to her. Fred Harmon boasted of being the very first, and carried the boast about on his shoulders as though the first always has the best chance, but his boast was not an audible one. The married ladies and the few unmarried ladies in the house, along with the young widow who tended the cigar stand in the office, met her and welcomed her as one of their number, but the motive that impelled them to seek her acquaintance was different from that which impelled her male admirers. Before she had been in Prescott a fortnight, she had received invitations to some of the select parties, and had actually attended one. Needless to say, she was not a wallflower.

It was May, and the position which she had secured at Phoenix would not call her till September, hence there was nothing for her to do now but to abandon herself to Prescott's summer season.

One morning after a thunderstorm, Myrnie was standing upon the balcony upon which her room opened, viewing the freshened landscape, that glistened like a jewel in the clear sunshine. In Arizona a thunderstorm seems to burst abruptly from a clear sky, rages fiercely, passes quickly and leaves a serene, fragrant atmosphere and smiling firmament. Rivers rise and run dry again, all in the space of a few hours.

The girl felt the influence of eyes fastened upon her. She looked about her nervously, but, seeing no one, continued to look over the brilliant hills. Presently something, perhaps a slight noise overhead, caused her to look

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upward, and there, from the balcony above, she beheld a pair of the most admiring eyes bent upon her. The eyes smiled, and Myrnie, after hesitating for a moment, smiled too; she had looked into these eyes before.

"Better view from up here," Fred Harmon called down to her. "Come up and I shall be pleased to point out to you some of Prescott's interesting features." She ran to the end of the balcony where the stairway was, but before ascending hesitated an instant. Should she go or should she not? Something within her free will said "No," but soon this free will fled from her and she went up to him. She had been duly warned and had made her choice. This was the last time this warning voice should speak.

A pleasant conversation ensued, in which Fred learned that Myrnie had come to Arizona to teach school, because better salaries are paid in the Territory than elsewhere in the country. "Besides," she confided to him, "girls of my age can scarcely secure good positions in the East, experienced teachers are so plentiful."

"But do you not feel awfully alone here in this strange land so far from home with no trusted friends near?" he asked her.

"No, I feel free. There is such excessive freedom here, so much air, so much sky, so much space. Freedom, freedom of the right sort, freedom of thought. I think I should always stay young here. There is nothing that binds. This life brings enthusiasm and enthusiasm is youth. I am going to forget my birthdays and always remain as I am."

They laughed at this, and Fred spoke, "If it was known this climate could produce that effect on the



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gentler sex, I fear all the women of creation would attempt to crowd within our borders, and that would be more disastrous than has been the dearth of women in this country. Few girls, out alone in the world as you are, could confront so much freedom without a guiding hand. I wonder that your relatives permit it."

"My friends think I am with friends of the family, and I did not tell them that these friends went to California soon after I came here; but please, Mr. Harmon, do not commence to preach. I have been preached at all my life. I came West to get away from it."

"But you do need some one to help you in this wide-open place."

"I do not think I should object to a guiding hand, but I do object to a certain kind of restraint, that which keeps me from putting forth the best that is in me. I have no parents, no brothers, no sisters, nobody. I was reared by a kind and considerate aunt, but she had a family of her own and there really never was any place for me. So as soon as I could command the little inheritance left me I started out to do for myself."

"And came to dry, warped Arizona," he said, looking at her earnestly.

"Yes, it does seem dry and warped in some places, but I am learning to like it, really. I must like it. It is not one bit like Nova Scotia, and when I first came to Phoenix, I thought I should die for a glimpse of something beautiful."

"Why did you not look into your mirror?" he asked, smiling slyly.

"Yes, that might have done for a sight of something green. Every woman looks into her mirror often

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enough, men say, but really I think I shall grow fond of Arizona. I am beginning to see that the much-abused land has a rare kind of beauty of her own. There is such dearth of moisture and verdure in some parts of this country, as to make the naked aridity positively attractive. Think of the stretches and waste of desert, these severe and barren mountains, the misty distances and the mirage."

Fred's eyes were fastened upon her as she thus ran on in her vivacious way. He listened, charmed at her perfect English and well modulated voice, so different from the twang in the speech of the Western girls. "You have discovered a great deal, little girl," he said. "Many people live here for a lifetime and never find so much. But look, out there—the rainbow is bending over Pilot knob. Can Nova Scotia excel that?"

"Nova Scotia?" she asked. "Humph, Nova Scotia can excel every other place." The tears stood in her eyes and Fred knew that he had before him a little, homesick girl.

"I have travelled in many parts of the country, not in Nova Scotia, however, but Arizona always calls me back. There is fascination here, something that lures and draws me. I guess I am a genuine Hassayamper."

"And what is a Hassayamper?" she asked, looking at him queerly.

Fred laughed, as every one always does in Arizona when he speaks of the Hassayamper. "A Hassayamper? Well, a Hassayamper is any person who has drank the water of the Hassayampa river. They say here in this country that if you have ever drank that water you can never permanently leave the territory."

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"Mercy! I hope I shall never be compelled to drink it. Have you been so unfortunate, Mr. Harmon?"

"Unfortunate? I once rode all day in order to do so. No one misses it out here. But the water has even worse effects I am told."

"What else? What could be worse?"

"Well, after you have tasted this water you become very careless in handling the truth, in fact can scarcely tell the truth."

"Mercy me, I shall certainly beware the Hassayampa. And you have drank it? I shall be careful of you."

"Since you are to teach in Phoenix, you can avoid the Hassayampa, but you cannot escape me in that way."

"I am to teach a mile outside of Phoenix on the Yuma road."

"That is called the Umbrella district, because of all those umbrella trees which surround the school house. I know the place well. I make my headquarters at Phoenix during the winter. We shall be neighbors."

Fred's duty took him away at this point, and his mental comment, as he went down the stair, was "this will never, never do. What a damned fool I am anyway."

"Maybe not so bad after all," was what the girl said. But after this conversation, Fred, who had been accustomed to giving his thoughts to problems of a more sober nature, met with the groups of friendly loggers who congregated on the upper balconies of evenings. Days were growing warm and rooms were none too cool of nights, and is it not a known fact that the inhabitants of the West spend their summers, and indeed most of their winters, out of doors? Besides it was light moon—light moon in Arizona, if you know what that means. These

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were the excuses Harmon allowed himself. Myrnie was with these light-hearted groups. Can any one imagine how pleasant were these evenings? Think of the most carefree hour you ever spent and compare them. Still you could hardly have an accurate idea then, unless your happy hour was spent in the Southwest. For this is the land where bargained-for customs are set aside, where jealousy does not flourish, and where woman to woman is honest, as well as man to man or woman to man. The scattered inhabitants cherish fellowship in a bond of equality, of simple brotherhood. These people love their country. Governor Tritles once voiced public sentiment from the speaker's platform when he said, "If you find a man who will not speak up for his country, kill him just as quick as you can, and if any jury in this Territory convicts that man, I promise to write his pardon."

Although Myrnie was by far the most lovely of the women present at these evening gatherings, no one seemed jealous of her, unless it was the widow who tended the cigar stand in the office, and of that I am not sure. Rare women! One thing did puzzle them though, and that was what she was doing when she locked herself in her room all the forenoon and politely informed them that she did not care to be molested. You cannot expect them to have been without curiosity, for they were women.

"What is she doing in there?" they would quiz the chambermaid.

"Don't know, seems to write or something. Guess she left a passel of sweethearts behind."

I may as well tell you what she was doing. The little silly had literary notions, and wished to make some extra

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pocket money in that way. She was trying to write stories, but all her copy was returned to her as "unavailable," being too void of experience to be classed as literature.

Mr. Harmon again came upon the little Nova Scotian, when she sat alone in a hammock swinging aimlessly. Her hair was in disorder, and her general aspect was that of one who does not "give a twopenny damn" for anything. Perhaps she had forgotten just then that she had grown into a young lady and was no longer a little girl. Some girls do that at intervals, till they have had years enough of womanhood's cares to establish a habit. Fred was surprised. She had before this time represented all that was staid and proper to him. He need not have been surprised, however, for in the years that should stretch before them, he had yet to come in contact with many of her moods.

"To what nationality might you belong, Miss Les-ton?" was the first question.

"I might be Irish, but I am not," was her careless answer, still swinging.

"Oh, really; how disappointing."

"Disappointing?"

"Yes, quite. I am partial to the Irish."

"Irish always loves Irish, but how they do fight! If I had any Irish I would not admit it."

"Oh, you are bitter now, mere prejudice. But tell me, what are you?"

"Well, I am Scotch, Scotch, Mr. Irish; do not forget it." She put her face contemptuously close to his. That dainty perfume which always hung around her was in his nostrils. It was hard for the man to bear.

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"Of course, I might have known that you are Scotch."

"Scotch I am sir; my father was a poor fisherman who dwelt at Port Hawkesbury, and my mother was a bonnie lassie living at Port Mulgrave just across the Gut of Canso from father's port. They met one day when mother was out with her father on his fishing smack on the great Bras d'or. As soon as mother spied father she saw the love light in his een. Soon after this he took to crossing the Gut of Canso daily. Sometimes when there was no other way he swam the Gut, and they met at a secret trysting place among the rocks and cliffs along the shore. His smack was wrecked near that treacherous, sandy Isle of Sable, and he was lost. Mother died grieving for him, soon after my birth. They were both born in Scotland, but I was born in Nova Scotia. I can speak Scotch like a real bonnie lassie.

She put her face dangerously close to his again and asked, "Dinna ye think I can, Mr. Irish?" She hastened on, without waiting for a reply; "I was reared by an English aunt who lived at Grand Pre on the basin of Minas."

"You are Evangeline, then. Are you now on your search for Gabriel? If you are, I am Gabriel."

"You are too old for Gabriel; he was young."

The bitter truth of his increasing years went to the man's heart like a knife. He would gladly have given all but one year of his life at that moment if he could have been young with this girl. But he answered smiling, "But Gabriel was old when Evangeline found him."

She saw his hurt look, and enjoyed it and felt for him at the same time, but spoke impetuously: "Oh, Mr. Har-

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mon, I am so homesick, so homesick, so lonesome for Nova Scotia. There is no person in all the West, I believe, who has ever been there. If someone would only talk about it with me, even though he only pretended to have been there, I think I should continually seek his society. But no, these Western people know nothing but Hassayampa."

Whereupon Fred commenced to search through geographies and to haunt the library, where encyclopedias were to be found. Soon he knew the peninsula of Nova Scotia from end to end, and could talk intelligently on the subject. Maybe his mining interests suffered a little in these days, but he knew Nova Scotia, and that proves that Emerson was right when he said, "For every loss there is a gain and for every gain there is a loss."

Fred did not realize that he was making a ninny of himself to please this girl. He was only eager to have this creature continually seek his society. This she never did. She did not need to, for he kept on seeking her. Fred Harmon was what both men and women call a fine fellow. Rather handsome he was, in his broad-shouldered strength, his frank grey eyes and his well-kept blonde moustache. How plainly his high-topped boots of yellow leather bespoke his occupation, and gave to him the flavor of the mountains. Everybody knew Fred. He was a mining man of some repute in the locality, and some of his recent reports on gold and copper properties had brought good luck to those who had been wise enough to take advantage of his judgment. His name was well known in mining circles throughout the Territory, and it was a common thing to hear him quoted among miners and prospectors. He was a man

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of perhaps thirty-six years, but one who showed no signs of that age, being of that type which trouble does not mar. A good cigar or a cold bottle with a friend levelled all the high places. "Never cry for spilt milk," was his favorite axiom. He was a man who had gone through life with a certain self-assertiveness which had enabled him to get about what he wanted, whether it was rightfully his or not, obstacles not counting. Any student of human nature will know that this is the man to follow his desires and not the one to conceal an emotion or passion.



## CHAPTER II.

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ONE evening in the early part of June, it was Harmon's good fortune to find Miss Leston alone again. After a few preliminary remarks he mentioned that it was a pleasant stroll to Forte Whipple or to the Pines.

"I have been to the Forte," she told him. "Let us walk to the Pines."

They loitered along in the cool evening, feeling satisfied with life. They were coming to the place where people began to tell each other all about themselves. Myrnie had told Fred about her life at previous meetings and, always eager to learn more about her, he had not been slow to ask questions. She had told him that one of the faults her English aunt had found with her was that she had always preferred the society of boys and men to that of girls or ladies; also that she refused to grow up and become dignified as befitted a lady, but seemed to cling always to some of her most childish habits. She also recounted that once, when her aunt took her to a public gathering to see the Governor-general and his wife, the lady (seeing the pretty child) had wished to kiss her, but the little girl exclaimed, "Don't ikes to tiss womens, dest ikes to tiss mens!" Of course, the good-natured Governor promptly kissed the child.

Myrnie had learned little about Fred, except that he

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had been reared in Ohio, that he had followed mining for the last ten years, and had as yet not made a great deal of money, but that recently his affairs were so shaping themselves as to make his holdings in certain copper properties promise to be very valuable.

They climbed up to the top of one of the cliffs, that jut in such abundance from the hillsides out west of the town, and sat down on a huge, round boulder. Silence held them for a time, as they took in the restful scene. Pine needles were falling all about them, and that spicy fragrance of pine woods was everywhere. The sounds of evening came up from the village, and the influences of peace crept into both their hearts.

Fred knew well enough what he was going to say, but he was in no hurry about it. Presently he began.

"It's fine sailing on the Bras d' or, isn't it?"

She almost fell off the rock, but she understood him at once. That vivid, fleeting blush came to her face and her eyes danced.

"Oh, isn't it, though," but she was laughing so at the fraud of the thing that she could hardly speak. But nevertheless, she meant to perform her part and went on. "The water is so smooth and calm."

"That is because it is a dear imprisoned sea," he told her knowingly.

"Oh, you dear," burst from her in a whisper, and she forgot herself and squeezed his arm with both hands, but she drew away quickly, and smiling archly went on wagging her head, "It's pretty cold in winter, don't you think?"

"Yes, but you know we never used to mind that. We were dressed for it. But I have always thought that the

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Valley of Annapolis was the garden spot of Nova Scotia. It is mild and fine there, and the scenery is so grand. And the fruit and vegetables raised there, my, my, so fine. The apples are famed for their keeping properties. Most of them are shipped to England."

"And do you remember the salmon that come from the St. Mary's River?" she asked, enjoying herself immensely.

"Do I? well I should say I do. And many's the time I've roved through those splendid forests of spruce, hemlock and pine. Good moose and elk hunting, but the wolf is there no more; poor Mr. Wolf is extinct. I used to love to meet the Indians in those dense, mossy labyrinths, the Micmacs and the Malicites."

She laughed and gurgled in glee; she twisted about, being unable to sit still, but she wished to have him go on, and to draw him out she continued, "Yes, but many of the fine forests have been removed."

"That was to satisfy the commercial instincts of the white man. The tanning barks were too valuable to be left where they were, and the great, hardwood trees must be felled to build ships; but they have taken so many of the trees that shipbuilding has declined."

"I love the flowers that grow in the valleys. Some of those varieties do not grow elsewhere in the world."

"Yes, the valleys are fine in their way, but best of all are the lofty hills that surround the Basin of Minas."

This was more than Myrnie could endure silently. She sprang to her feet and hopped about on the top of the boulder. Her glee was that of a child. Fred sat convulsed at her juvenile excitement, but presently went on,

"The Basin of Minas is the most remarkable of the arms

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of the Bay of Fundy. It extends inland sixty miles and the tides rush in with savage impetuosity, sometimes as high as sixty feet, while in Halifax harbor they scarcely rise eight feet."

Now she came and sat so close to him that his arm pressed against her soft, round bosom. At this he thought it better to change the subject, but he knew that he now held the key to unlock the dormant interest in her mind.

"Tell me more about your life in Nova Scotia," he said, moving away from her.

"I have told you all about myself; it is your turn to give me your history." There was a vexed tone in her voice, as though she understood that he had moved away to check her rush of feeling. How dare he presume to guard over her in this way?

"Oh, my life has been so plain that you could scarcely call it history. Never had any Governors kissing me," he laughingly threw at her. "Besides, you have told me very little about your own history."

"Pray, what have I left out? There was just the plain life of toil and study, with a little chafing at the bands that bound, yes, and my ungratified longing for some expression of myself—music, art or something fine, something better than just everyday things."

"I do not know why you say ungratified. I can find no fault with your music; I call it excellent."

"My music is a sickly failure, falling all too short of my ideal."

"Everything falls short of ideals in this world, unless it is the grossly material, a good dinner or a bottle of

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champagne. But what of all those sweethearts and broken hearts left behind in Nova Scotia? "

" Oh, Mr. Harmon, you always joke about everything. There were no sweethearts in Nova Scotia."

" Come, come; it is you who are joking now."

" There were none, I swear," she sighed, looking up from the moss her delicate fingers were pulling from the rock. " My aunt would never allow me to have that kind of company. I was too young, and I had my part of the housework to perform. My aunt could keep only one servant. But they could never make me cook. My cousins practiced music, and could not have their hands spoiled by housework. Most of my musical efforts are mere imitations of what they did and that is why I am dissatisfied with them."

" A Cinderella you must have been as well as an Evangeline."

" Yes, a real one without a fairy Godmother. My aunt gave me an education and I am grateful for that."

" She deserves thanks. But I still believe there must have been some schoolgirl amours. You told me yourself that your aunt's one great task with you was your preference for the male sex."

" Yes, but I did not want them for sweethearts. I only like men to talk to; I like the things they talk about. Women will be talking about the kitchen, and who is sick, and such dull, small things. The professors at school were too strict. No girl could have a fellow unless she crept out of windows at night, and that is too risky. They always get caught."

They both laughed at this remark, and Fred contin-

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ued, "A girl like you with no lover,—that's a miracle." However, he seemed highly elated over the discovery.

"But you,—you have had sweethearts; tell me of them," she said.

"Yes," he replied, looking into her inquiring eyes, "I have had many, but I do not believe, that I ever truly loved one of them."

"Oh, here you are joking again, you cruel man."

"No, I am not joking. I was sincere enough at the time. Yes, I thought I was sincerely in love. But I want to tell you that a fellow may have imagined himself madly in love many times and all at once, when he is past the fickle age, meet some one who proves to him that he has never before really loved."

"Oh, no, no, Mr. Harmon."

"Oh, yes, yes, yes, Miss Leston," firmly.

"Then you are a fickle flirt," she told him frankly.

"The majority of men who have not yet found that great love are flirts. I have been looking for a love all my life that would put an end to my desire to flirt, but I know you can not comprehend that," he added apologetically.

She looked at him wonderingly and said, "Then you must believe in affinities."

"I think I do believe in affinities now, although it is a theory I have always poohooed until recently. I have always argued that the affinity doctrine was an hallucination liable to find lodgment in the fanciful minds of the very young. But one changes his theories suddenly sometimes."

"Affinities? Why, of course, there are affinities. My father and mother were affinities. I have a whole lot

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of love letters which they wrote after they were married that prove it." Her fine eyes wandered dreamily over the hills as she continued, deliberately, "And how I have wished to meet my affinity, but I never have, and I should think a girl of twenty would have, if she was ever going to, don't you?"

He laughed good naturedly at her, shaking his head as he remarked, "Perhaps some people do meet the affinity at such an early age, but it usually comes later in life, after they have experienced a great deal."

She broke in abruptly, her face aglow in so venturesome a conversation. "I have always heard that you know the person to be your affinity the moment the eyes meet. Do you think that is true?" Her hands were clasped over her breast tensely during these last words, and her eyes sparkled.

Fred Harmon was quite overcome. How plainly her words proclaimed her untried stainlessness. His desire was to reach out and take her in his arms.

"I do not think that is necessarily true always," he said, still looking at her.

"Well, tell me, have you ever met a person whom you thought was your affinity?"

"I have met one whom I know is my affinity," he said firmly, knowing that he was all kinds of a fool the minute the speech was uttered.

"Oh, please do tell me about her." But his ardent gaze feasting upon her face, as it were, with softened eyes, caused her to look down quickly, and she blushed that same vivid, fleeting blush. Fred for a moment sat motionless, while he looked at her. He then turned and gazed dejectedly down the canon.

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"No, I will tell you of a girl whom I once thought I loved, but found my mistake too late."

She dropped the twisted moss and drew a quick breath, sitting erect, expectant.

"It was in Ohio, fifteen years ago." He changed his position and continued, "I was a young fellow then, and more thoughtless and impulsive than I am now. I was reckless, spending my money and getting into scrapes. My father urged me to marry. 'Marry some nice girl and settle down,' he kept saying to me. My father believed in early marriages, simply because his marriage had been an early and a successful one. At that time he wanted a partner in a wholesale lumber business and, naturally wishing to give me a start, told me that if I would settle, or in other words marry, he would give me a half interest in the business. I did not think much of his offer, because I did not care to marry, not knowing at that time a girl whom I could love as a wife. But father kept at me with his talk of marriage, telling me of all the advantages over and over, till I commenced to see things his way. I had always placed great faith in my father's judgment. Soon I met a rather nice little girl of about my own age. She was engaged to be married to a fellow who was no friend of mine; in fact, we were rivals in more ways than one. Tom Mason was his name. I went in for Tom's girl just for pure cussedness, and was much elated to find that I was making some headway in the affair. In course of time, I saw that she preferred me to my rival, and since it was cutting him up so badly, I carried things to a successful finish. After a very short courtship we were married, on the same day set for her marriage to his Nibs."



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Fred glanced at Myrnie occasionally during his narrative. She had been listening breathlessly, till he said, 'We were married,' then she paled, flushed and crushed the moss between her fingers.

"She was not my affinity," he continued, in an altered voice. "And after a month of married life I found my mistake was a very great one. I did not love her. It had been but the spirit of conquest that led me to win and marry her. She seemed to care enough for me. The other fellow left the country utterly heart-broken. He died a year or two afterwards. But I think I have been the unlucky man of the two. I decided to cover my mistake and to live it down. I respected my wife. I went into business with father and made money, and they all thought me happy. Father thought he had done me a good turn, but I am glad he never knew what it cost me."

"That's all right, Mr. Harmon. You need not confide in me further. Just keep the remainder of your story to yourself." The girl's face was very decided. A forbidding frown passed over her features, an injured look through and through. Something of a sneer marred her usually serene expression.

"Why are you offended?" he asked in surprise.

"Why did you not tell me this before?"

"I am telling you now."

"Well, that is all right, then. Only—see, it grows late. The pine tree's shadows lay far ahead of us. There, the sun is gone."

"But this is the best part of the day. Let us wait awhile."

"I prefer to go now. It is growing chilly." Her

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voice was certainly chilly, and so conclusive that he argued no further, but helped her down from the high rock in silence. He rather followed her home than accompanied her. She walked a little in advance of him, as if to say, "I could easily go home alone." Even his remark that this reminded him of evenings he had spent in dear old Nova Scotia, only sent her head higher into the air, as she smiled coldly.

She did not bid him a very cordial good-night at the head of the stair, and once inside her room, she tore her things off carelessly and went to bed early, feeling that the world was pretty much of a sham. "He is just a big cheat. I will let him entirely alone."

Fred Harmon did not retire early. He went out and strolled about the town, wandering from place to place, but every scene was distasteful to him. He heard the voluminous tones of the girls singing in the saloons along Whiskey Row, passed by their doors and saw these women in evening gowns leading men to the bar and enticing them to drink. Harmon had often entered these places to hear these women sing. The majority of them possessed good voices, being as they mostly were, girls from Eastern homes, who, having gone astray, had wandered West, and finding seven dollars a night an inducement, had taken these positions in saloons to earn a livelihood. Beautiful girls, some of them, filling the homes of some of Arizona's rich men to-day.

But the saloon singer is a thing of the past. Women were scarce in those days. I remember one of those singers who went by the name of Dimples, who was as pretty as a pansy. She married a wealthy doctor. Another, called Bronco Nell, married a man who afterwards

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became Governor of the Territory. Much as you may be surprised, they made good wives.

But Fred did not enter these places to-night. His soul turned sick at the sight of a woman intoxicated, each arm around the neck of a man. Heretofore, he had only shrugged his shoulders at this condition of Western life, with a muttered thought. "Takes all kinds of people to make a world," but his ideals were very high to-night. He went into an ice cream parlor and met a group of mining men who insisted that he come back to the hotel and play a game of solo. They played till past midnight. Harmon lost heavily; Fate was against him.

Next morning, when he tried to converse with Myrnie, she only answered him in monosyllables and left him. For several days she eluded him, dividing her time pretty evenly between Kelly and Joe Mower. He wrote her a polite note, asking the privilege of explaining further, suggesting that he thought an explanation would benefit them both, and asking her to drive with him that evening. But she sent him word that she had another and a previous engagement for the evening, that she was going out with Mr. Kelly. Now, Kelly did not know that she had an engagement with him for that evening. She had not replied to the invitation he had given her the day before. She now went to him and told him that she could go.

After they had ridden for an hour, discussing a great many light subjects, there being no one topic common to them, Kelly ventured upon that which had lain next his heart all the evening.

"There is one little fact I would like to put you wise to, Miss Leston, if you will pardon the seeming cheek."

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"Why, certainly; what is it?"

"Well, it's that gent, Mr. Harmon. Guess he is a decent sort of chap, all right, but still I do not believe you are next to him on every proposition. Joe was telling me last week that one of us ought to put you next. We both hated to chip in, as second-hand goods of that kind are not always the real thing, but I told Joe that for your sake I'd brace up this evening and give you a little nudge. I know he has a smooth tongue and can give slick dope, but I don't think he has come out flat-footed with you on every proposition."

"Indeed he has, Mr. Kelly," tossing her head independently, her color rising, "He, he—really he has told me everything, there is a perfect understanding between us."

"Oh, he was white enough to do the clean thing was he? Well, I notice that you have cut him out of late."

"No, he has been busy of evenings, but we are the best of friends, and I am going out with him to-morrow."

"The hell you say! No, excuse me miss, I used the wrong word. But you see—you see—well it is like this—"

The girl was laughing merrily at his confusion, and assured him that she was not offended.

"Well, you see when a girl like you hits the burg, fellows like Joe and I feel that we ought to have a show for the white alley, and we sure do get wrathful when an old codger like Harmon gets in his work."

"I should not call Mr. Harmon so old."

"No, only about old enough to be an ancestor of yours. But, of course, if he has explained himself, and you still

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think he is O. K., I guess we may as well change our chewing."

"I see no necessity of discussing this question further," was her tart reply.

Kelly saw his finish, as he told Joe that night. "No show for us. We may as well vamoose the ranch. I sure barked up the wrong tree this time. She's plumb salomed on the old guy. Gee, but she flew off the handle something fierce; thought I was giving her a con game I guess. She sure handed me a bunch."

"Have you ever seen the old boy disguised in liquor, Kelly? Go at her with that. Maybe you can make that stick."

"No, siree. I don't want to see her dander up again. It's too dangerous, besides I do not think he hits booze much. I've seen him with a small skate on; guess he gets pretty well teed sometimes, but I am sure he is not the kind that gets paralyzed."

"But she's sure a swell proposition," Joe lamented.

"Yes, and when I think of him being the whole cheese with her I'd like to knock his damn block off. But I guess we will have to face the music; say one word against him to her and she sure bawls you out proper."

After this drive with Kelly, Myrnie hurriedly wrote a letter and instructed the bell boy to give it to Harmon upon the first opportunity. Fred Harmon's hand shook nervously as he read,

"Dear Mr. Harmon:

I shall be pleased to have you explain those things of which you spoke in your last communication, and for that

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purpose will accompany you upon any excursion you may plan for to-morrow afternoon.

Sincerely,

Myrnie Leston."

Harmon was knocking at her door in a few minutes. She was a little frustrated and surprised when she opened the door.

"I wish to thank you for the pleasure this has given me," still holding the note paper in his hand. "I wish to take you to a favorite spot of mine. It is five miles from town, and we can easily go after dinner to-morrow; makes a fine drive."

"I shall be delighted," was her smiling reply.

Harmon was not so comfortable over this success as one might suppose. He dreaded to lay before the eyes of this unsophisticated girl that which it was his duty to tell her, since the simple statement of an early marriage had so upset her.

### CHAPTER III.

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THE next day was Sunday—such as we remember long afterward. It seemed to start right with everybody. People sprang from their beds on the moment of awakening, deliciously refreshed from a night of restful sleep, ran their fingers through their hair, and rubbed the drowsiness from their eyes, while they luxuriated in the invigorating ozone with which they filled their lungs as it crowded into rooms through open windows; enjoyed the bite in the morning air as they bathed in sparkling, cold water and thanked their Creator that they were alive. Those who seldom gave a thought to nature, in her various forms of wonder, marveled at the glorious sun, as he peeped all golden and fiery through the green of eastern pines, smiled at the flowers, few as they were, if any chanced to grow by their windows, and listened with rapture to the music of the lark, that world-wide songster; dressed themselves in their most becoming garments and sallied forth, bent on helping to make a Western holiday, for at that time Sunday in Prescott was observed as little else by the majority of its people.

There were churches in Prescott, and they were all well enough filled. But do people go to church to worship God? Some people go to church to learn to worship God, but few really worship there. God is worshipped

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in the deeps of the secret soul. Everybody worships God, but they do not all know it. The Western cowboy, the least religious soul in the world you say, worships him, but he does it inside no cathedral walls. He worships in the open air of the great plains, when his soul is lifted up by that lofty sense of happiness which comes to him in his life of unbounded freedom. He knows it, but his reticence prevents his confession to his taciturn comrades.

Every living creature worships God; the fowls of the air, the fish of the sea, the beasts of the field; God is universal. Is not the fulfilling of His purpose worship of Him? Oh, narrow thoughted man, who falls upon his knees, muttering lip-service, 'tis he alone, indeed, who worships God.

Myrnie Leston also caught the spirit of the day, and came forth her brightest. She was a little curious to know the result of the afternoon drive. Still, she had enjoyed other like excursions among the rocky hills on fine, clear days, and knew already the perfect abandonment of the natural self known only to the Westerner; she knew the exhilarating pleasure which ensues when hour after hour goes by, and it is difficult to decide which is uppermost, the spirit or the flesh; when care is thrown to the winds and the memory of childhood comes back with a force that brings one almost to tears. She was impatient for the hour to arrive and grew restless. She wondered if this spot out in the hills would not be a little like Nova Scotia. She closed her eyes and sat dreaming. Before she knew it, Fred had arrived and was telling her that it was time to go.

He had not been so eager for the hour to come. His



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nerves were tense, and when the time drew near he wished it hours away, that he might still speculate on the joys to come, without experiencing the consequences which he feared. Neither was he unaware of the extraordinary charms of this particular day, but to him it meant more than mere beauty. To his mind, all this harmory pointed to the dual nature in the entity of creation which causes a plant to spring from its seed, to bud, bloom and bear fruit; which causes a bird to sing so joyously to his mate in springtime, or which makes the heart of man to beat so violently at the thought of a maiden. And all this for the one subtle purpose. Nature has her axe to grind and her device is alluring in the extreme. "Go forth, multiply and replenish the earth," is the Supreme command.

As Fred had gone about during the forenoon, the burden of his thought had expressed itself thus: "Oh, the sky is so blue and the grass is so green. Why is one green and the other blue, and how can the birds sing so? Sing on, birds, and express for me that which I can find no voice to speak." But before he realized it, he had been driving for some time, the lines actually in his hands and the girl beside him. How wonderfully transformed we become when we are picked up by love and carried up among the clouds. Why try to prevent or curb the course of love? It is a raging flood which carries everything along by a resistless power.

It was a long time before Fred could find anything to say, and Myrnie remained silent from choice. After a mile or two of silence, except the remarks he addressed to the horse, he managed to speak.

"Isn't it just a charming day?"

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"It is."

After another mile or two of muteness, he resumed.

"I think June is the most charming month in Prescott; earlier, it is a little raw, and later, too warm; but at this particular time of the year the air is balmy and most refreshing. The hills are covered with their best flowers now. The wild orchids must be in bloom where we are going. I passed there a week ago and a great many were budded. There are some large trees there, near a bluff of rocks, and the place is damp and shady. Rare flowers seek secluded places, you know. Not far from Lynx Creek, now this is the Lynx Creek road. It is not wonderful that Arizona produces a greater variety of flora than other sections of the Union, because there are so many different climates in the Territory. There are four hundred distinct species of grass within our borders, I am told." But when he found that botany, which he knew to be one of her favorite topics, did not make her communicative, he tried a different method.

"I have noticed, though, that the flowers in this dry climate lack the fragrance of those in dear, old Nova Scotia."

She laughed out merrily, and seemed in the best of humor as they again carried on a lively, farce argument about this land of which she was always dreaming.

"I thought, Mr. Harmon, that you had something to explain to me," she said.

He almost dropped the lines. "Yes, yes, but this road is bad, and this pesky horse takes all my time now. He is as hard-mouthed as sin. I was going to tell you more about the place where we are going. It is quite an oasis, one might say, for this country. A little lake fills a

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hollow up, till the first of July, and the lake is actually fringed about with young fir trees and brake. A round knoll overlooks the lake, and one might almost think he was among the lakes of Nova Scotia. We shall soon be there now. Nice grass to sit on, fine place to come to understandings," he answered nervously.

When they arrived at the place described, Myrnie was lifted from the buggy, and the horse was allowed to graze. All coldness and reserve were instantly banished, so great was the girl's delight in the freshness and beauty of the place. Fred stood by and watched her every pleased motion and expression. They walked to the knoll and sat down on the grass, their faces toward the water.

"You seemed rather disconcerted the other day," he began after a while, "when I told you that I married the woman I was telling you about."

"Yes," she answered without hesitation, "It seemed strange to me that we had known each other these several weeks, we had been out together so often, and you had told me nothing about it. Besides there was all your talk about your life being too plain to be called history. But perhaps it does not matter—perhaps it is the way of men. Say no more about it—it is a thing of the past. I am a bit unused to Western ways as yet, and many little things like that have upset me since I came out here."

"There is nothing particularly Western about this affair. You evidently are utterly unacquainted with the world."

"I think I am learning pretty fast in Arizona," she retorted, warmly.

"In ten years from now you will look at life from a

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different viewpoint and will not think of taking exception to such a trifle."

"I hope never to reach such a callous mental state, and I do not see that the years necessarily bring it," she said in the same voice. "My aunt in Nova Scotia is more than ten years my senior and she thinks such things are perfectly terrible."

Again they sat for a time without speaking, Myrnie wearing a serene, exalted expression, Fred the picture of dire discontent. But still he had something to be thankful for—he did not know her aunt in Nova Scotia.

"I suppose, that is, well—the lady died?" She almost whispered the last few words, a red spot burning in each cheek.

He shook his head three or four times as though scarcely conscious of what he did. He had grown pale. An awkward embarrassment took possession of them both; presently, he faced her, and spoke in resolute tones.

"No, she did not die, and there is no divorce. The lady lives in Phoenix, and is known to the world as my wife. I seldom go there, except to see Wallace, my little son."

It would be difficult to describe the changes of expression on the face of Myrnie, as she listened to these coldly uttered words; utter incredulity, pity, resentment, pride, anger. Then she sat staring at him with a hurt, appealing face.

"Oh, I know you think I am a brute," he said with a little ironical laugh, "Perhaps I have not been exactly fair, but when you have heard all, I am sure you will find forgiveness in your heart for me."

"I do not intend to hear all. Say no more about it,"

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she finally stammered. "Let us gather some of the orchids and go home. I do not care about your affair. That is your secret, and why should I embarrass you by prying into it?"

"No," he spoke very firmly, "I want you to hear. I brought you here to give you a full explanation, and I must beg you to listen. I tried to tell you before, but you would not listen. I mean to tell you the whole story now." He was looking squarely at her.

"But why should you tell me? This does not concern me at all. I refuse to listen."

"You are unjust to me, unless you listen. The part of my story which you have heard puts me in a false light."

"But, Mr. Harmon, we have had a pleasant enough friendship. No harm has come of it, but let this be an end of it. I now wish to return to Prescott. Will you take me there?" She used a casual, indifferent tone, which seemed to madden him.

"After a few minutes' conversation, yes."

"Then I shall walk." And, springing up quickly, she went to the road, swinging her body independently, her head in the air.

Fred sat and watched her. He could not help laughing to himself at her helpless independence. He went to her and stood in front of her, smiling.

"This road does not go to Prescott. It leads off among those mountains and black canons. You are going in a wrong direction. Don't you see that you would be lost out here in the mountains, if you started home alone? The mountain lions would eat you sure."

Notwithstanding the tenseness of the moment they

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both laughed; and that made them seem less like strangers. She gave up the idea of walking the five miles through the beast-infested mountains, and very reluctantly suffered herself to be led back to the lake, where they seated themselves again.

"I told you before," launching into his story without spirit, "that my father urged me to marry the girl, and brought every influence to bear on that one thing, and that I did not love her. Her mother wisely tried to discourage the union, telling me that her daughter was unhealthy, always had been and always should be, as she firmly believed; but I was thoughtless, and did not realize that marriage is for a lifetime. Few young people ever do think of such things. But I have been duly recompensed for my thoughtlessness. She has been an invalid since Wallace was born, and bound to her bed most of the time. I am sure the woman has suffered. She has never cared for another man, little as she has cared for me."

The girl sat so still, with such a passive, expressionless face, the narrator could not warm to his story. He was not sure that she was listening to him. Never a word, a sigh or a glance cast in his direction.

"I have devoted my entire time to her comfort," he plunged on with bull-dog tenacity. "She has lacked nothing, and it has taken all I have made. She has had her nurse constantly by her side, and has gone from climate to climate, seeking ease and comfort. On account of her nervous condition, she has been most peevish and impossible to please. She worships Wallace, and never denies him a wish. I see him becoming dreadfully spoiled, but I dare not say one word. She never gives

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me a civil word or look, and often I feel sure that she hates me. I do not mean to complain. No doubt this is what I deserve. We usually do get what we deserve in this world, but does it not seem that I have paid the utmost farthing for a boy's folly? I go to her when she calls me, or when it is necessary, but I have tried to keep my unhappy mistake from her, and from the world. You are the only person I have ever told. There would be no kindness in telling her."

"And so you have deceived her," Myrnie said quietly.

"It would have been wrong to worry her with my troubles, and since I never cared for any one else, it was not deceiving her."

"Oh, excuse me. I misunderstood you. I thought you said you had met your affinity." She was smiling a mean little smile.

"I did say that. But I suppose I shall have to sacrifice the affinity," he answered wearily.

"Your child deserves some consideration, I should think."

"He is the only one who makes life bearable for me. I love the little fellow with all the strength of my being."

"Fatherly feeling, of course."

"Well," he raised his voice as though in anger, "A man wants more than that—a man in his full strength and vigor. He wants love, love reciprocated." Her mocking laugh rang out like a clear bell. He did not note the nervous tremor in it.

"Do I deserve no credit, no sympathy for the part I have been forced to play?" he asked, in the same voice.

"Oh, it bees sympathy yez bees lookin' afther?" This time her laugh was more nervous, as she went on, "I

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think your wife deserves all the sympathy, all the pity and credit," looking him fearlessly in the face.

"Oh, you do? I might have expected that from you."

He looked into the lake despondently. When he turned toward her again, he saw that tears were in her eyes. There was no change in her expression, no drawing of any of the muscles about her mouth. It still kept its calm, serene outline, but the tears coursed down her cheeks in numbers and fell on her hands and lap. Fred had never seen a woman crying thus; he was used to the kind that make a great whining and thrashing around. The sight of tears falling silently unmanned him. He lay his face down on the grass and struggled hard with himself. He felt that he was a mean, cruel wretch. But when he looked at her again there were no tears. The face was tranquil and collected. He put up a hand and touched her very gently, as if to ascertain if she were human.

After a little, they arose and with a common impulse, went to where the orchids grew in large numbers in the cool, mossy places, protected from the sun's strong rays. Myrnie danced with childish joy, as she gathered her arms full of them, so great was her delight in the delicate, moccasin-like flowers, commonly known as the "lady-slipper."

The distance back to town was travelled almost in silence. Fred was completely absorbed in his own dark reflections. Myrnie looked straight ahead, occasionally holding the flowers to her face. When they had traveled about half the distance, Fred brought himself to say,

"There is one thing that I wish you would accept from me, Miss Leston; it is this bit of advice. You do not



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know this Western country well. It is so different from Nova Scotia. There are many dangers here for a girl like you. I shudder to think of your being here alone, and you go about, with this one and that one, in a most promiscuous way."

"I want experience, I crave it. I want almost tragedy, it seems to awaken something that seems to slumber within me." She spoke excitedly.

"That desire is a very, very wrong one. It is a great mistake, and is liable to lead you into a lot of trouble. You need some older person to guide you. This desire of yours is simply a desire for self development, and is all right, but the development of an intense nature like yours ought to be very carefully guided."

Never before had he wanted her so much as now. Her speech proved what he had thought. She had feeling, passion, poetry, gentleness and self honesty.

She paused before replying. "Don't you think, Mr. Harmon, that I am pretty capable of taking care of myself?"

He flinched a little at the words, but continued speaking, "I am sure your intentions are pure and good. No one could know that better than I do, you have always been closely protected, and never put on your own responsibility before."

"But I wanted to get away by myself, where I could live my own life on my own lines. My relatives always held me down, and would not let me discover anything."

Fred laughed, and putting his hand under her chin said, "Oh, you little chick."

"Don't," she said, drawing away angrily.

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He sobered quickly and asked, "Then you do not realize that you need some one by you?"

"There is no one at hand and I must go alone," was her curt reply.

"I wish you would look upon me as that person. And remember that you can come to me at any time, and with anything, and I will do all I can to aid you." Fred's voice was tender and fatherly. Her reply was unexpected.

"Thank you, but, but—but Mr. Harmon, I do not think you are a very nice man."

"No?" This one word choked him so that he could say no more, as they drove back to town in silence.

The sun shone all red and yellow in a western, clouded sky, throwing its radiance into their faces, and giving to them an imitation of happiness. But the sun soon dropped behind the hill, and when they reached the hotel, the lights were aglow in the lobby. They said good-night in coldly polite way, and she went into the hall. Fred stood and watched her with a sinking heart, wondering when he should see her again, knowing that when she awoke the next morning, he should be far from Prescott.

## CHAPTER IV.

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THOSE who live in country places know that the Fourth of July, next to Christmas, is the one great holiday of the year. Prescott celebrates this day with all pomp due to the honor of a great nation. The patriotism in such rural districts is more genuine than that evinced in great cities. The country people are simpler of heart, more natural in the expression of their feelings, and, therefore, more sincere in any kind of demonstration.

Flags, bands of music and red lemonade are everyday luxuries to the city bred. In Prescott, where the majority of people who enjoy these celebrations, pour in from the smaller towns or from the mere country itself, a drink of lemonade is a treat; the strains from a band, be it ever so poor an excuse for music, lift the soul of the rustic to the sky; the child, the youth, the maiden are awakened by it. It even stirs the elderly from their contented ease. But when the Stars and Stripes float on the breeze, are not all eyes turned heavenward? Are not the victories of Washington, the woes of Lincoln, the sacrifices of Davis, and the honors of Grant, bound up in its sacred folds? Ah, the Fourth of July is a glorious day to the rustics. It means as much to Aunt Miranda, with her basket full of good things under the wagon seat, as it does to young Susan, with her cheap challie dress and

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new fan; as much to Uncle Hiram, by way of memories, as it does to little Willie, with his peanuts and fire-crackers.

This particular celebration of which I speak, was neither superior, nor inferior, to many of its predecessors in Prescott, but it surged madly to and fro, as though its like had never been known before. It mattered not that Prescott did not afford an ideal spot for such an observance, no dense grove of trees, no grassy carpet, no cool, shady places for the lemonade stands and speaker's platform; no, it was just as glorious an affair, in the midst of the hilly streets, hot and dusty, as though it possessed all. Nothing can dampen the ardor of the sturdy Westerner.

The "merry-go-round" was under a stretched canvas on the plaza. The egg race, potato race, the sack race, the burro race, and the young Squaw race, were to take place in Main Street, while the balloon ascension was billed to occur on the summit of Cordez Hill.

If you had been in Prescott on that day, you would have wondered where all these people came from. If, on the other hand, you could have been poised high enough above the town, early that morning to command a distinct view of the surrounding country, your question would have been answered satisfactorily. Roads from every direction led to Prescott, and all were teeming with moving throngs bound for that city.

They came from a hundred miles or more—heavy farm wagons, completely filled; chairs behind the seat, or planks laid across the wagon bed, to serve as seats. There were sometimes as many as fifteen persons in one of these wagons. Perhaps two or three families, from the

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upper Verde, clubbed together and came in a party. They started the day before, and after a long but jolly ride, camped a mile or two outside of town, in order to get in early the next day.

A dozen young men on horseback came dashing along at full gallop. They were a band of cowboys from Brown's Springs and Cherry Creek. They had risen at 3 A. M. that morning and, having no mercy on horseflesh, were due in Prescott by 10 o'clock. What cared they for horseflesh this day? Did they not give especial attention to their horses at most times, and were their tough ponies not hard yet from the late Spring round-up? Their pockets jingled with the earnings of the last three months. They had prepared for this occasion, and meant there should be "something doing." It would be a shame to save the money. Prescott was a wide open town in those days, with a Whiskey Row a half mile long and some times even then, *there was a man for breakfast*. But most of the jokes that this lusty band threw at each other on that strenuous ride, contained some allusion to Granite Street. Their minds ran in such currents at such times.

"Say, Sour-dough," calls out Silvertip, "I hear they have been having camp meetin's in town. Some new Sky-pilots have swarmed the place."

"Let them swarm," says Sour-dough, "what do such as we care for those devil-dodgers?"

"But," puts in Dug Bremister, "maybe a moral wave has hit the burg, and maybe we can't cavort around as we used to."

"Don't you never fear," confides Doc Mannart, "I

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savy those fire-escapes; just grease their paw sufficient and mum is the word."

"How much of the long green have you for Granite Street, John Alex?" asks the man of the premature silvery locks.

"That's accordin' to what kind of propositions I find on Granite Street," answered John Alexander promptly.

"He's lookin' for charcoal blossoms," chimes in Awk Bremister.

"Now don't be so funny, Awk, a seniorita is good enough for me. But I'll bet I have as much of the chink for any proposition as you have, and will cough up as plentiful too."

"Ther's one thing dead sure," ventures Sour-dough, "if Prescott don't give us a free swing, we can pull up stakes and make a bee line for another village on a keen trot."

"Have no fear for Prescott," Doc Manhart confides, "she's beyond recall; let the shy-pilots do their wenie-worst. It will be a cold day in Juvember before she is anything but a dead sport's town."

Grin had kept his peace during this conversation, which they threw at each other as they sped along, but he knew in his clean heart that none of his hard earned wad should go for any of these things.

"I should like to hear some real good music, though," he commented to himself. And thus they galloped on.

There were scores of Mexican families bound for Prescott, hailing from their scant ranches all over the country, wherever there were to be found a spring and a cottonwood tree. Their rickety old wagons rattled merrily along, drawn by thin, old mangy horses, the har-

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ness having scarcely the strength to draw the load of parents, and seven or eight *muchachos*; being spliced and bound up with bailing wire and strings. Here and there, one or two of the little lean, brown boys who could not find room in the wagon, came jogging along behind, on lazy burros which they were compelled to beat unmercifully at every step, to make them move at all, until the little arms were tired almost past motion.

American fathers, or *gringos*, as the Mexicans say, headed some of these outfits; little dried-up, parched-looking men in every case—the only type that marries the squaw or the *senorita*. His beard may be grizzled and stiff, though his haggard-looking spouse may not be over thirty.

The *senorita* marries at fifteen, and is an old woman at thirty. Such groups as these sailed into town with the greatest pretense, joyous in their bright-colored, cheap clothes, covered with dust, and all unconscious of the spectacle they made. Patriotism, was it, they evinced?

Then, there were the respectable families, ranchers and miners, who lived near town. They came in buggies, with good horses and decent apparel.

The roads presented continuous streaks of foggy dust from all directions. The trains from Phoenix emptied their hordes, which had been picked up at small towns all along the way. Not many came from Phoenix, however, being too jealous of Prescott for many of her people to make holiday there. Trains from the north brought visitors from Flagstaff, Jerome, Wilcox, Holbrook and Ash Fork. The "jerk-water" steam cars from Mayer brought those from Big Bug, Poland and Cordes.

At last the crowd has assembled. The band plays in

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the plaza, and the sun burns down hot. A stray breeze shifts about, and blows dust into everybody's eyes. Speaking and a musical program from the platform in front of the Courthouse, facing the plaza, occupy the whole of the forenoon. This part of the day interests the men.

The women are eager to spread their feasts, and have the remainder of the day free. The races of the afternoon are now beginning, which are of interest to everyone. All goes smoothly until the Squaw race is called. Everyone is on the tiptoe of expectation, for this is one of the novelties. But, when the glittering band of hill-nymphs is brought forward, decked in beads, fringed buckskin and paint, they refuse to run, and hang back, giggling and covering their spreading mouths with their hands. Naughty, timid, blushing maidens! At the first opportunity, they break for liberty, running for the hills and woods like frightened doe, and there is no Squaw race that day.

The hordes surge and mingle in cosmopolitan variety. Irishmen, of which Prescott has a generous share, are red-faced and garrulous, not very good-natured, but ready to laugh if they see the prospect of a fight between two or more of their less sober fellows, urging it on, if they think it is going to fail. They tell their cronies that the parade reminds them of St. Patrick's Day, on Fifth Avenue, New York, years ago when they "came over."

Negroes, not a few, independent and strutting, as they are everywhere, except in the South. Mexicans, greasy and trifling, as they are always, everywhere, under all circumstances. Jews—but I need not describe the Jew; everybody knows "Ikey," with his palms turned up.

Girls from Granite street, dressed showily, the gown



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of the saloon singer exceeding all others; housewives, who are robbed of their liberty because of the brood of children they must herd; waitresses and chambermaids, tightly laced and enjoying a social rating, accorded them no place else under the sun; troops of pretty working girls, stenographers, book-keepers, saleswomen and cashiers, holding themselves above their sisters, the chambermaids and waitresses, for a reason I never could comprehend. School teachers, in twos and threes, each with a male escort, for if you think the teachers of Arizona do not enjoy the company of men, you are mistaken. They are no superannuated set, severely prim, extremely long waisted, flat-chested, old maids, those teachers of Arizona; no! They keep their trustees constantly searching for substitutes so frequently do they resign their schools in midwinter to wed. Let a spinster come from Boston to Arizona; she soon becomes rejuvenated, loses her reserve, and lives as she should have lived at sixteen or twenty. She becomes natural; something in the atmosphere of Arizona making people honest, candid and frank. To these attractive and capable women, representing many Eastern colleges and normals, is due all praise and credit for the splendid educational system of Arizona. They are universally bright, pretty and attractive, worthy the place they hold in the esteem of the people.

Myrnie Leston was helping to celebrate on this particular National Birthday in Prescott. She was not with Joe, nor Kelly, nor even with Mr. Harmon, having given each of them the "Nova Scotian turn-down." She was with another teacher, a pretty brunette. These girls were friends, principally because they were being waited upon by the "little operators," who were friends also. This friendship was cemented by another common bond—

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Bessie was a native of Manitoba, and lived with a married sister in Prescott.

The "little operators" were busy at the wires during the day, and could not be with them until six, at which time they were to be accorded the honor of escorting the girls to the ball in Odd Fellows' Hall.

Bessie was a pretty girl, after the fashion of brunettes, but Myrnie's Edna-May style of beauty was even more charming, having about her that which, in a woman, we call "sweet."

These girls had put in a jolly day, sitting by and commenting on the queer individuals who passed, for they were good students of human nature. They had been "treated" and "swung" by all the young men they knew; had even ridden the merry-go-round with a big, country lad, out of which they had a great deal of sport.

Toward the close of the afternoon, Myrnie saw a well-known figure standing some distance from her, leaning against the band-stand and looking steadily at her. As soon as his eye caught hers, he came over to her, looking pale but handsome, in his summer suit and Panama. Myrnie smiled, and introduced him to her friend, a little nervously. If she had not seen him for some time, he always exerted a strange, compelling influence over her. Just then some one came for Bessie, who would not be refused, and Fred Harmon and Myrnie were left to themselves.

"Yes," remarked Fred, taking a seat beside her, without being invited, "I sent the family to Los Angeles for the summer. Just returned to Phoenix three days ago, and, having business in Prescott, was glad to spend to-day here."

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"Should think Los Angeles a much pleasanter place to spend the Fourth of July," she said.

"No, as I once told you, I am a genuine 'Hassayamper' and love to wander back to the land of enchantment; love to answer the call to the desert, and the 'call of the wild.' But, how fine you are looking. Got one or two freckles on your nose, though," he went on. "How is Prescott treating you?"

"Wonderfully well," she told him. "Why, Mr. Harmon, I am growing to love it. Bessie and I have lovely times, I am living with her at her sister's house now, and that is better than hotel life for me."

"It is indeed, and I am glad to hear that; I have thought about you a lot and worried about you——"

She cut him off with, "Oh, Mr. Harmon, you make me very tired, really." He laughed good-naturedly, touching her under the chin with the small flag he held, while she continued,

"I like the Western people. I like the women of Arizona, and I find them equal in most ways, and superior in some, to the Eastern women. Their manners may shock their Eastern sisters occasionally, but the customs are different. I think the women here are more honest with themselves, and think on broader lines. There are as many homes of culture here, in proportion to the population, as there are in the East."

"Whew! You are becoming a strong champion for the West," he exclaimed. "But I think, myself, that your deductions are not far from correct. It appears that you have been thinking a little for yourself already—been observing, discovering."

"I cannot understand why Arizona has not been given Statehood," she put in, "She is certainly entitled to it——"

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"Speak on, oh, wise and gentle sage, but you will have to go to the G. O. P. for the answer to that," said he, placing one hand on her shoulder. "I cannot answer your question because I am one of those fool Democrats. But, come with me and have something cold, and let us not have such strong sentiments on the Fourth of July; it is too warm."

They went toward an ice cream parlor, entered and found empty seats. Harmon was beaming with a radiant happiness. Nothing seemed to matter now, but the present. The worn, wan look left his face, and in its stead came a smile and a pair of bright eyes, which rested upon her every minute.

"Seems awfully good to see you, it has been so long. How well you manage to look all the time. Yes, it has been a long time."

"Well, where have you kept yourself all this time?" he was delighted to have her ask.

"Oh, I left town the next day—the next day after I last saw you. Business took me away, but I did not think you wanted to see me again," he added, looking at her nervously.

Her sympathy expressed itself in a smile, which he mistook for encouragement, and again became himself.

After fifteen minutes of conversation on topics personal and otherwise, a bell boy from the hotel hurriedly interrupted.

"Found you at last, Mr. Harmon. Been searching for you everywhere for the last half hour. Mr. Burke told me I must find you, for he said this message was important."

The boy tossed him the sealed envelope and ran away, before Harmon could ask him a word. There was noth-

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ing to do but consult the telegram, which he did, growing haggard the while.

He arose, still reading the telegram, "Bad news from Los Angeles; will just have time to catch the west bound passenger. Good bye."

Myrnie sat stunned for a moment, then, collecting her senses, read what was on the yellow paper left in her lap. "If you wish to see Amy alive, come at once.

Mother."

She crushed the paper in her fingers, threw it down and ground it under her heel. "I wonder why he thinks I care about him and his affairs?"

She arose and went to seek Bessie, smiling and talkative as usual, but, in the background of her mind, ran a train of thought, which, put into words, would have run something like this; "Pretends not to care for her. I notice he rushes headlong, pale and trembling after her, on the least mention of her name. O, world of deceit!"

The spice of the day's enjoyment seemed to have vanished for Myrnie. The Indian war dance, which commenced at dusk in the plaza, held little charm for her, though it had been the one feature of the day to which she had looked forward with greatest interest.

There were over a hundred Indians—seventy-five braves—the remainder women and children, who had been paid to come from the Post at Camp Verde to perform this novel spectacle. Myrnie stood with the rest, watching the weird dance for hours, her thoughts far away in a maze of imaginative romance.

The would-be warriors, with bodies stripped to the waists, were gaily painted, and much bedecked with fancy articles and feathers. They began the dance by forming a circle of about ten men; these circled from

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left to right, from right to left, singing and grunting a wild refrain. Each time, when they finished the song, they opened the circle and let in another buck; thus they continued till the whole number, including women and children, were circling and grinding the earth into a well-defined path beneath their moccasined feet. At times the song became shrill and high, and the men broke into a war whoop which sent the blood racing wildly through their veins. After this, the bucks took from their belts imitations of human scalps, and waved them above their heads, the squaws alone yelling and cheering. This festivity lasted far into the night, the Red men seeming to forget they had been paid to amuse the Pale Face, but entering into the warlike spirit of it, and becoming so hilarious that by midnight some of the more excited had to be locked up.

The dance in Odd Fellows' Hall also lacked the spirit of previous occasions to Myrnie. When she and Bessie were retiring that night, at the hour of 2 A. M., she said irritably,

"Do you know, Bessie, I am tired of that operator."

"Oh, no, you are not honey; he is just cute."

"He is not the kind of fellow I like. His head is too small and his feet are too small; his hands are so weak looking. He never could be anything but a salary man."

Bessie laughed heartily at this description, and said she never saw such a girl, but Myrnie continued.

"He seems so inexperienced with girls; is really half bashful when we are alone. Does not know how to pay anyone a compliment. I like experienced men, who dote on you and pour out pretty speeches and compliments."

"Oh, come now, honey. You will not spoil all our fun by throwing the operator over. I know the kind

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you speak of are more interesting, but they are not often so sincere as the more silent kind. Really fine men are not often found outside of books."

"I have met such men, though, one now and then, outside of books." These last words were spoken in a drawl, for the girls were now in bed and half asleep.

Two days later Myrnie received a letter. It was from Mr. Harmon and ran:

"Dear Miss Leston:

I wish to apologize for leaving you so abruptly in Prescott the other day. I presume you read the message I left in your lap. When I reached the city, I found Mrs. Harmon's health much improved, in fact she seems in better health now than she has been for a long time. But that is the way she always is. One day you think she is dying, and the next day she is well. I hope to come back to my enchanted land soon. I hope to see you, too.

Sincerely,

Fred Harmon."

If Myrnie had tried, she could not have accounted for the anger which filled her as she read this letter. There seemed to rise up within her a demon of gigantic proportions, which controlled her. She tried to analyze her varied emotions, that she might understand herself, and consequently read others, but this feeling of rage she could not analyze.

"I wonder what he thinks I care for all that?" And she relieved her mood by tearing the paper into fragments, and casting it from her.

## CHAPTER V.

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ABOUT a mile out of Phoenix on the Yuma road, stands a neat little school house. It is September, but is still very hot in the Salt River Valley. The umbrella trees which surround the building were meant to protect it from the burning rays of the most torrid sun in the United States, but they serve only to check any wandering current of air, which might, by some odd chance, happen to stray in that direction. The atmosphere within the room and without is sweltering. The doors at each end of the room are wide open. The three windows on each side of the house are also open, but not a single breeze is felt within.

The little school mistress stands rather proudly before a class of small children. This is her first experience in real school teaching, but one would never think so to see Myrnie Leston now. She has perfect command of self; how confident she is of every statement she makes; what perfect English she uses; she knows exactly what to do next, for her work has been planned in every detail. To be sure there is no reason why she should not be confident. She has no tousel-headed, big boys in her school; there is not a child in the room more than twelve years old, and the hearts of her twenty pupils were hers from



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the first day, worshipping her blindly, and vying with each other to win her praise.

Such a picture she makes in the plain school room; her wonderful hair does not fall low over the high forehead now. It is too warm, and is parted, brushed plainly back, and made into two big braids which crown her head and give her an intellectual, queenly bearing.

The heat keeps her skin velvety with moisture, and the bloom ever fresh on her cheeks. So serene, so intellectual, so incorporeal she appears, and her thoughts are as free from guile as the minds of the little children about her. Teaching, with Myrnie Leston, is not drudgery, but a very lofty occupation.

Already Phoenix has noticed her, and has tried to make friends with her, but she keeps herself aloof. She is absorbed in her work, and does not need a host of friends. In her school days even, she did not care to have many close friends, often saying there was enough in one's own mind to keep one from loneliness. Life had now assumed new proportions and was new and wonderful enough to her to keep her satisfied within the circle of her own interests.

Several young men have tried to attract her attention, but they have failed. The women and girls of Phoenix generally have said they do not care for her.

"She is too much of a prig, and is altogether too unusual. Guess she thinks people who come from Nova Scotia are better than those in the wild and woolly West. Well, I find it a good plan to leave eccentric people to themselves," are some of the comments of the women.

It is quite noticeable, though, that the County Superintendent has visited the school twice already. In former

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years, he paid one of the two visits, which the law required of him during the first half of the year, and the second one toward the close of the term, and the teacher saw no more of him. But, in this case, it was plain that Mr. Fullerton meant to become acquainted with Miss Leston.

"Teacher," whispered a little girl who came to have a word pronounced, "If here doesn't come Grandmammy Fullerton again."

Myrnie looked up to see the round, fat face of the Superintendent at the door. She arose and went to meet him. He supposed her laughter indicated her pleasure at seeing him, little dreaming that her amusement was at his expense.

"I could not resist the temptation of visiting this model, little school as I passed by," he explained, mopping his smooth, pink face with his handkerchief.

"Yes, this is a good place to get a cold drink," she answered. "There is no better water than hangs in our *olla*. It is always filled the night before, and by morning is as cold as ice."

He went to the *olla* and drank rapidly of its refreshing, cold water. Oh, the cool, dripping *olla* which hung in the dense shade of an umbrella tree, and dripped and dripped. The ground under, and around it was patted down hard by the little feet of many school years, for the children sought the *olla* often. I am sorry for those who do not know what the *olla*, is for no "old, oaken bucket" was ever so tempting. The *olla* is the Indian's water jug, but, because of its convenience, is used even by the rich in Arizona. It is made of clay, well mixed with powdered buffalo chips, moulded and shaped by the

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hand of the squaw, and burnt in a kiln till it is hard and red like tile. The powdered manure is consumed during the process of burning, and thus the jug is left porous, and, when filled with water, leaks sufficiently to cause continual evaporation. In a dry climate like Arizona, the water within is as cold as ice. Eastern people misunderstand and discredit this fact, even when they behold the wonder with their own eyes, but every Westerner is well acquainted with the blessed *olla*.

"There are so few schools in this county," the Superintendent told her, as soon as he could breathe after such rapid drinking, "of which as a Superintendent I can feel proud; and when I come to one like this, I just have a desire to enter, and sit, and sit, and watch the clock-work go on. It is such a rest to my tired, over-worked nerves to find this crowning glory of my efforts here."

"I am just ready to close," she told him, still laughing. He was one at whom it was easy to laugh. "You are just in time to give my girls and boys a talk."

The children winked at one another and smiled, knowing there was a good laugh in store, for Fullerton always said things to make them laugh. Once seated inside the room, he looked into all the little faces, then at the teacher. His sides were shaking with suppressed merriment. Every one in the room was soon laughing, till the tears ran down their cheeks, and no one knew why, unless it was at the toad-like appearance of the Superintendent, as he sat huddled on a chair too small for him. But this was the effect he invariably produced on children, whom he loved and understood perfectly.

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At length he arose, and, shaking his head by way of pause, said with deliberation,

"Children, I feel safe in saying that you do not appreciate your good fortune in having this little lady for your teacher."

"Yes, we do, we do," interrupted several voices.

At this the Superintendent enjoyed a hearty laugh, and looked slyly at Myrnie, remarking in an undertone, "Even they know a good thing when they see it."

He saw instantly that he had made a mistake, for the girl threw up her head sarcastically, so he made an attempt to soothe her.

"It is well if you do. I visit all the schools in this county, and I think I ought to know who the good teachers are. You are indeed fortunate. Franklin, Lincoln or Greely, had no such opportunity as this. All the teachers in those days were stern masters, who were never seen without a big stick; that was their only means of control, but your teacher rules by love, pure and gentle."

There was moisture in the Superintendent's eyes. He was a sentimental old fellow, and loved to plunge from one extreme of emotion into another. The children looked very sober, many of them dropping their eyes while the speaker continued.

"Now look about you." The children all looked. "There is no big stick in sight anywhere, unless indeed, it be me."

At this the children roared, jumping up and down in their seats, and breaking into wild disorder. Fullerton sat convulsed, holding his fat sides. How he loved children, and at no other time so much as when they were

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capricious, and turned into the outlaw that every child is at times.

Myrnie made no attempt to bring discipline out of this chaos. No teacher ever could preserve order when Fullerton was about. He was a jolly old bachelor, and loved his joke. I am told that he made a similar speech at every school he visited, his purpose being to make the teachers his allies, their voices counting for him at election times. He likewise had strings on the children's hearts. He played with them at their recesses, or at the noon intermission, if he happened along at such times. "Pussy wants a corner," and "Aunty over," were favorite games. The mirth of the children when he ran, or when he flopped to the ground, if about to be caught, was very great, and, of course, every child chose him, trying to catch him, and make him "It."

But the game in which he most delighted, was a rollicking affair of his own invention, which he called "Hounds and Bruin." In this, he was the bear, and all the boys a pack of hounds. From quarter to quarter they chased him, bringing him to bay at frequent intervals, when he, on all fours, boxed them when they came too near the savage monster. Often they got a knock that would have sent them post haste in tears to the teacher, if anyone else had dealt the blow. But scratches don't count when Hounds are chasing Bear. At times, the whole pack of baying beasts would take him from behind and in front, and pin him to the ground. Then the bear was dead.

Fullerton made a ridiculous spectacle during this escapade, but what cared he for that? He would come out of it exhausted and perspiring, but would sit and shake

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his sides for hours afterwards, in memory of the rare sport.

This also counted for him on election days, the children always reminding their fathers, when starting for the polls—"Be sure to vote for Fullerton, papa."

Some student of human nature had dubbed him "Grandmammy Fullerton," and, in the way such things spread, it had reached the farthestmost limits of his territory. No one loved him the less for it; he knew of it himself, and enjoyed the distinction it gave him. He had been elected to the office of County Superintendent for four consecutive terms, and stood a fair chance to hold the position for the remainder of his days. He was an indefatigable worker, and would not have changed places with the President of the United States.

The days wore on into late autumn. It grew cooler. A few untimely frosts had fallen, biting the alfalfa fields and spotting them with brown. The long rows of cottonwood trees, which abound about Phoenix, following the canal banks and cutting the country into squares, were dropping their leaves, and spreading their webs of cotton over everything. The summer haze, which had dimmed the distant mountains, had cleared away, revealing a clear, crisp atmosphere, and making the Camel's Back seem only a few miles distant, when in truth it is fifteen miles away. Still, the sun shone serenely, giving to Phoenix her three hundred and sixty-five days of sunshine.

These solemn days set Myrnie thinking, and her thoughts at such times were liable to drift into melancholy ways. She commenced looking about her to find diversion for her idle hours at home, school work taking little of her time, outside of the school room.

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Mrs. Long, the widow with whom Myrnie lived, told her of one Alfred Stiner, master of the pianoforte and of the violin, and informed her that he was the ablest musician in Phoenix. Myrnie went to see him, and arranged to take instruction on the violin, the one instrument with which she was already familiar.

Stiner was a dark-complexioned, Philadelphia-born German, who had been educated in the fatherland where he had also married, but he was a *lunger* and had been ordered West by his physician. He had lived in Arizona for five years, and although apparently restored in health he dared not leave, lest the dread disease return. During this time, he had once returned East for a visit, but the old soreness came back to his chest, the familiar cough was heard again, so back to his "sunland" he hurried, where he was wise enough to remain. His wife, and their two children, would not cross the ocean, and come to the far country of wild men; to live apart was their only alternative.

Mr. Stiner was a man of fine intellect; a dreamer, a typical musician, with dark, passionate eyes and long hair. His long, shapely fingers instantly reminded one of beautiful strains of music.

Myrnie and this man seemed strangely drawn together. There existed between them a mental bond, such as highly attuned intellects understand. There was also that physical attraction which exists between certain types of blondes and brunettes.

Mr. Stiner lived in apartments in a big house on Adams street, with a pretty garden in front. After the lesson, he would accompany Myrnie along the rose-lined path to the gate, or they sometimes sat in the garden and conversed, Stiner always leading the conversa-

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tion and the girl proving to be a good listener. At such times, he either told her of his home in Leipzig, or of some musician and his work. Often he dwelt upon his loneliness and chafed at his life apart from his family.

"Ah, my wife and my sweet babies," he would say, "life is not worth much here, as I am. May as well go back to Germany and die."

Myrnie comforted him at these times seeming especially fitted for the task. How easily she found her way to the heart of every man—without effort, and in a way natural to her. They began looking forward to these visits. Alfred Stiner was the one person in all Phoenix who was really interesting to Myrnie, and she seemed more companionable to him than any person he knew in the West.

After she had gone, he would say to himself, "Her understanding of the heart's deep needs is wonderful, and she so young; her tender sympathy and reciprocation."

Myrnie walked into town of an evening to take her lessons. This walk led her past the house where Superintendent Fullerton lived. If that jolly, old "grandmammy" saw her pass, as he invariably did, he ran out to meet her, with a joke or two. This delayed, as well as annoyed, the girl. Perhaps it was a bit of motherly advice he had to offer, a warning against some bad character with whom he had seen her talking, or may be he wished to shower praise upon her. Not infrequently he spoke of himself.

"Do you know," he would say, "I cannot bear to see a little child suffer. It gives me pain; now I do not mean figurative pain, but real physical pain about my



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heart. If I am angry, my arms ache, and grief deprives me of the use of my legs. I find myself so different from other men. I have lain awake all night often, suffering from one or more of these pains. I remember several years ago, when I was teaching in Mesa, I had a pupil—a thin, little boy who seemed ill; I studied the child closely and I found that he was really starving. I then took more lunch than I wanted, and used to call him in and feed him, under the pretense that I could not eat all I had. I got him to looking fine. His mother found it out, but instead of blessing me, as a good mother should, she let her foolish pride control her, and took him out of school. Yes, you know I find myself so different from other men. The men laugh and say to me, ‘Fullerton, we believe you are a monstrosity;’ they laugh at me and call me ‘old woman’ and ‘grandmammy’ and say, ‘We think you are unnatural.’ Here he laughed covertly. ‘Why don’t you get married?’ and ‘We have come to the conclusion that you are made wrong.’ More sly laughter, and a wink at Myrnie. “But the truth is, Miss Leston, that I find so few women who are good enough for me. I deserve a pure girl. My system is as pure as gold. The doctor, in examining a drop of my blood, said, ‘Fullerton, your blood is as pure as an infant’s. There is no hint of any kind of disease in your system.’ I am proud of this, Miss Leston, and I hold myself high and dear on account of it.”

Myrnie wondered often what the Superintendent meant by this. She could not make him out. This did not ring true, and her woman’s instinct warned her against him. She was not bothered with sympathy in this case, but such talk sent a sickening qualm through her every nerve.

## CHAPTER VI.

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ANOTHER evening, when Myrnie was taking her customary walk into town, she was overtaken by a buggy, carrying a single occupant, before she had gone any distance. The man drew rein, and she saw that he was tipping his hat to her.

"Pardon my seeming rudeness, Miss," he said, smiling. "If you are going to Phoenix, I shall be glad to give you a ride." His hat was not placed on his head till he had finished speaking. His appearance and his manners were equally in good form.

"Thank you," she responded, as she went toward the vehicle. "I am late this evening, and can profit by a ride."

He sprang from the buggy, and helped her into the seat. This is a common custom in Arizona, where weary pedestrians make long journeys, and where the sun's extreme heat makes walking difficult. The hearts of men are warm and merciful to one another, in this isolated land. This kindness is called giving a fellow a "lift," and no offence is taken, be it man or woman to whom it is proffered. These "lifts" on the road are sometimes the beginning of enduring friendships. The inhabitants of the Territory, being cosmopolitan—here today and gone tomorrow—find it convenient and pleasant to

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make friends and acquaintances easily. This accounts perhaps, in a measure, for the unrestrained and straightforward manner of Western people.

Myrnie noticed that her companion was a man of middle age. His hair, in particular, attracted her attention. Once of raven hue, now half white, it presented that silver luster which is the crown of a man's maturer years and formed a series of regular waves, which added to its beauty.

"I go into town twice during the week for my music lesson, and it is not often that I get a ride," she told him.

"I surmised some such fact, when I saw that you carried a violin case. Do you live out this way? You must be a stranger in this neighborhood."

"No, not exactly a stranger. I teach the Umbrella school, and have been here since September."

"Hum," and the gentleman smiled, pondering over pleasant memories. "Well, well, I used to teach school myself. But I have not taught since leaving Boston, where I taught for six years."

"Boston," she exclaimed. "I attended college in Boston, and know every foot of that ground—almost, it seems to me."

This bit of common knowledge served as an introduction, and they were still more delighted to find they had a mutual friend or two in Boston. When you are a stranger in a strange land, this goes a long way toward friendship. Indeed, in Arizona, relationship is sometimes claimed on the strength of it.

They talked of the East, and of the West, discussing the merits and demerits of each, finding they were agreed on most things, and beginning to feel like old friends.

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"I presume your family is here with you?" Myrnie returned.

"No, Miss Leston, I have the misfortune of being a divorced man."

"Ah," she exclaimed under her breath, and then remained silent.

"This is Tuesday," Mr. Adams said. "I presume you take your next lesson on Saturday."

She told him she did, and was not a little surprised when he overtook her at about the same place that day. As before, they talked of things present and past, and when they reached Professor Stiner's apartments, he helped her from the buggy, remarking:

"I hope we may see more of each other. I have horses and carriages, and would love to show you some of the surrounding country."

Myrnie was puzzled. She liked this man well enough, but she did not know whether she ought to ride with him or not, since he was a divorced man. When she reached home, she asked Mrs. Long if such a ride would be improper, relating her experience with Mr. Adams.

"Why, no, child," was the answer. "You are such a little goose. Take all the rides you can get."

After this, Mr. Adams overtook her often, accidentally, of course, but she always found reasons to refuse the rides he proposed, other than those "lifts" on the road.

"Shall I drive around for you on Sunday evening?" he asked her. "I am going to take two young ladies from Glendale—both are teachers—out to the orange grove, and we would be pleased to have you go with us."

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She would be delighted, she told him, as she had never seen an orange orchard, and would also be glad to meet new friends. On Sunday evening Mr. Adams came, but alone. The young ladies had, for some reason, he explained, been unable to keep the appointment. Myrnie tried to find some excuse also, but Mrs. Long was present, and insisted that she go. There was no dodging Mrs. Long.

The trip was a pleasant one, and she returned with her arms full of orange blossoms, while the ripe fruit filled her lap.

"He seems like a father or an uncle, and is very nice and kind," she told Mrs. Long, when she had returned. "He is very interesting company."

"It's not like the uncle or father he's feeling toward you, though," the widow laughingly told her.

"I am sure a man of his age would never think of me in any other light," the girl pouted.

"Oh, now, don't be too sure of that, Miss Innocence," answered the jolly widow.

"What do you mean, Mrs. Long?" she asked, looking surprised and hurt.

"Oh, nothing much. Only you just look out and 'saw wood.' You never can tell what those divorced men are thinking."

"You urged me to go with him yourself, and would not let me off. Now I think it is very unkind of you to say such things."

"Little goose," the lady consoled, "lose that baby innocence of yours. You amuse me more than any girl I know. You will never get on at all, if you don't learn how to meet the world any better than you do now. I

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have been a widow for three years, and I know the ropes. Girls do all sorts of things now, and nothing is thought of it. For my part, I think the more experience a girl can have with the 'Lords of Creation,' the better prepared she is for life."

"What kind of experience do you mean, Mrs. Long?" Myrnie asked.

"Oh, I am not particular. Most any kind that happens to come along will serve. Ha, ha, ha, little goose. Get next. Anything you can get out of a man is 'all to the mustard.' Like ole Mis Means used to say, 'While you are a-gittin' git a plenty.' There is not a girl in Phoenix who has not had her experience. The world today is quite different from what it was twenty years ago. The very nicest people do things today that would have ostracised them utterly then. And this condition exists everywhere in good society. Don't I read it in all the papers?" Mrs. Long was a devout peruser of the Hearst newspapers, and was exceedingly well posted.

"Mrs. Long, you have no right to say, 'all the girls in Phoenix,' for you can't know about that. Besides, time has not changed the rules and laws of morality. What was bad twenty years ago, is bad now. I think it is as you look at life—what you seek in life. You and I seem to look at life differently. My desire is to make a success of life."

But the elder lady was not abashed. She gave a brazen little laugh, and added:

"Oh, well, I see that you have a lot to learn yet. You'll see things different when you are older. Young people always do start out in life with their wagon

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hitched to a star, but they find in time that life is not the honest affair they thought it was. I was once like that, too, but I've learned the plain hard truth. Being a widow 'puts the blocks to you.' But I intend to stay a widow. A burnt child shuns the fire, you know."

Myrnie said nothing to this. She looked at her landlady searchingly, and drew her own conclusions as to what the "blocks" meant. Thereafter, she did not go to Mrs. Long for advice on any matter of morals.

Superintendent Fullerton saw Myrnie riding with Mr. Adams. He generally did see, or find out, everything worth seeing. The next time he saw her pass, he ran out to meet her.

"Aha, and with whom did I see you driving Sunday evening?" he asked, as though he had caught her in a trap.

"With Mr. Adams; why?" she asked, off her guard.

"And do you know what and who he is?" Fullerton asked, making his tones awesome, and looking wise.

"Yes, he is a teacher from Boston, and knows some of my friends up there," she answered, simply.

"He is a married man," Fullerton said, in tones still more awesome, and in half whispers, wrinkling his forehead.

"He told me he is divorced." Myrnie was straightforward and honest with everyone. If lying is ever permissible, it would have been advisable now.

"I understand that his wife has been trying to secure a divorce for some time, but that he will not grant it. It is in the courts now, or has been. It may have been settled recently, and I not have heard of it, but I do not

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think so. There is a lot of very bad talk about him." His forehead was full of wrinkles again.

A sinking sensation came over her at this information, but she struggled to show no sign of it. A feeling of contempt for Fullerton gained possession of her, as she replied:

"I think, Mr. Fullerton, that I will choose my companions without any aid from friends."

"Sure, sure. I do not mean to meddle. I know nothing against Adams of a certainty. It may all be black-mail. I am not blaming him, or anyone else, for wishing to be with you. But you have never ridden with me, and I am not so much as engaged to be married—though I should like to be." This last in his jovial, laughing way.

"You have never asked me to ride with you."

"Then I ask you now to go with me next Sunday afternoon," glowing.

"I have promised to go with Mr. Adams then." This gave her a little taste of revenge, but her companion was not so easily downed.

"Then make it Friday evening with me," he persisted.

Out of pure bravery, Myrnie agreed. You may be sure Fullerton was on hand on Friday evening, making his silly jokes and laughing at them himself.

"Are you intending to go with Adams on Sunday?" he asked.

"I told you that I was," she replied emphatically.

"I warn you not to go," and he covered his forehead with the wrinkles.

"I shall not heed your warning." Myrnie's head was in the air. She was ready for battle. Let the enemy come on.



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"He is not divorced. I have taken the pains to find out. I have talked with his wife, a lovely little woman, and the supporter of two children."

"Of course, that was a part of your business," she said, sarcastically.

"But, my dear little girl, my aim is to protect you," he said, laying a hand caressingly on hers.

"Perhaps you need some one to protect you first. The 'blind lead the blind and they both fall in the ditch,' you know." She pushed the hand off roughly.

Fullerton enjoyed a laugh alone. "You ought to hear his wife's story; she can tell you what he is," gathering up his slack lines.

"I think she would do well to refrain from disgracing her children by voicing such things about their father. I find Mr. Adams a gentleman."

"I am not blaming him, or anyone else, for wishing to be with you, as I told you before," laughing his disgustingly good-natured laugh.

"Neither do I," she said, with contemptuous independence.

"Not even me?" speaking in low tones, and placing his hand on her arm, with his face close to her.

"Oh, you? You do not count. You are immune," and she drew closer into her corner.

His sides shook with laughter, while he added, "Perhaps I can prove the contrary to you." He placed his free arm about her. She wrenched herself free, and told him to take her home at once. It was growing dark, and they were several miles from home.

"Then you do not like me little bittie?" again taking hold of her.

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"No, Mr. Fullerton, not in that way."

"Can't I kiss little girly?"

"No," she screamed. "Get away, and do not touch me."

"All right." He sat far over on his side of the seat. They drove a mile or two in a homeward direction on the smooth, hard road without a word.

"Are you mad with me?" he asked, sorrowfully.

"Never mind that, Mr. Fullerton; just take me home. I did not expect to come out here to be insulted."

"Oh, you did not?" He laughed all over, as though he thought it a very great joke. Presently he stopped the horse, remarking, "Guess this poor beast is tired, and wants to rest."

"But how late it will be when we get home," she protested.

"Aren't afraid of me, are you?"

"No indeed, sir, I am not. Who could be afraid of you?"

"Then I will make you afraid." He caught her roughly, his hot breath against her face.

"Old fool, old woman, let me go." But these were not the words to make him let her go. He laughed viciously, and made a remark which she remembered years after. The struggle continued, and there was a moment when the girl thought she was lost, but a propitious thought came to her. She seized his hat and threw it into the depths of the dusty road.

"Whoa," he shouted, and started for the hat. When he was half way out of the buggy, Myrnie seized the whip, wrenched the lines from his hands, and striking the horse a few sharp blows, left the Superintendent

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lying in the dusty road. He jumped and ran after her, kicking up a great dust, and swearing as he ran. When Myrnie reached the gate, she jumped from the carriage, threw the lines on the ground, and, giving the horse a smart slap on the hip with the palm of her hand, flew into the house, frightened almost past breathing. Mrs. Long and her son were in bed asleep. No one knew the manner of her coming in.

By the time he reached the gate, the horse was trotting a good distance ahead of him, on its way to the stable a mile away in Phoenix. Fullerton ran after it, shouting, "Whoa, whoa," till he was hoarse, but the wary animal kept a little ahead of him all the way. Perspiring, panting, and swearing, after a run of two miles, he gave a plausible excuse to the hostler at the stable, and walked home—a wiser and sadder man.

## CHAPTER VII.

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WHEN Myrnie walked into town the next day, the Superintendent was seen standing by the gate, sometime before she reached his dwelling place. On nearer approach, she noticed that he held in his fat hand a bouquet of beautiful roses, and that his shining countenance wore an expectant smile. He came to the fence as she approached, saying:

"Good-evening, little girl; I plucked these for you myself." Myrnie passed him without a glance in his direction.

"But you can't refuse the poor innocent flowers," and he tossed them over the fence to her. They fell in the dusty road directly in the way of her lifted foot. She stepped on them, crushing the fragrant petals, and rending them from their stems. A little thrill of regret ran through her, as she saw the quivering beauties fall to pieces; flowers were scarce, and she loved them so; but, since he had touched them, they must be vile.

Her path lay along the high board fence which surrounded his back yard, and by the time Myrnie reached this fence, Fullerton was there, trotting along, and laughing through the cracks at her, trying to coax her into speaking.

"Are you really so angry at me that you will not look

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at me? Look here, look, look; see what I have for you," but she only passed on, as though no one were near.

When she returned, walking briskly, like one quite satisfied with life, Fullerton was on hand, calling to her and looking the picture of distress. All his efforts were vain; she would not be reconciled.

During the early Sunday forenoon, Mrs. Long came into Myrnie's room, and informed her that a lady was waiting in the parlor to see her. Thinking it was one of her trustees, she hurried to meet her visitor, but on entering the parlor was somewhat surprised to find a perfect stranger—a small, pretty woman, whose black eyes held depths of excited passion, behind which there lurked a dancing smile, and a gleam of triumph.

"I believe this is Miss Leston," the stranger said, rising and extending a little, flashily jewelled hand. "I am Mrs. Adams, divorced wife of W. P., whom I believe you have met."

"Oh, yes," but Myrnie was so confused, she took the hand with anything but composure. She looked her visitor in the eye, but her cheeks grew very red. "I have met Mr. Adams, yes, I have met him; sit down, please, Mrs. Adams."

"Thank you," and the little lady took her seat, with a nod and a smile. Myrnie, feeling that she was smiling at her confusion, became instantly composed.

"I have been thinking of coming to see you for several days," Mrs. Adams said, "but, until this morning, I could not drum up the courage."

"I think of no reason why you should lack the courage, Mrs. Adams." Myrnie was very dignified now.

"That is because you do not comprehend the true

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state of affairs. I saw you often when you passed my house, going to your music lessons, I supposed. You looked like such a sincere, pure girl, and any one would know, to look at you, that your aims in life were high. I knew about what your life was, because I used to be like that myself. Yes, I used to sit and watch you, and think of the great love that was sure to come to a girl like you, and I wondered how love would deal with you.

"As I looked at you, I have asked God to spare you what I have suffered at the hands of a man."

Mrs. Adams paused in her rapid speech. Myrnie was looking intently at her, like one charmed; Mrs. Adams went on:

"What was my surprise when Superintendent Fullerton came and told me that W. P. was making up to you."

"What business was it of Fullerton's?" Myrnie broke out.

"He is a very tender-hearted and good man, my child, and wished to save you. I need not have been surprised. I might have known that W. P. would have discovered you. He always finds them—such girls as you. I believe that man can scent beauty a hundred miles away, and he is always on the scent. But, one woman's life is enough for that man to ruin. I feel for any girl to whom he takes a notion—he invariably brings her to shame. I have made up my mind to warn those I can in time, and that is why I am here this morning. You may well look bewildered, Miss Leston. I know he makes a good appearance, and acts the perfect gentleman at first, but just you wait. I hear you have been driving with him, frequently."

"Oh, no, Mrs. Adams, not frequently. Mr. Adams

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overtook me on the road several times, when I was walking to town, and when I found that he was from Boston, and knew some of my friends up there I rather felt that he came nearer being a friend of mine than any one else down here. When he said he was going to take two Glendale teachers to the orange grove, and asked me to go with them, I was very glad to go. We got the most orange blossoms that day. Mr. Adams seemed such a nice man; he told me he was divorced, and I supposed that it had all happened years ago."

"Who were the teachers from Glendale?" she asked quickly, leaning forward in her chair, in her eager haste to find out.

"I do not know. They did not come; he told me the reason why then, but I do not remember now. I was eager to see an orange orchard, and to get some of the flowers, and when he and Mrs. Long both urged me, I went alone with him. I could see no harm in it."

"No, my dear, there was no harm in that if W. P. had been a different kind of man. He was not divorced at that time."

"Mercy, mercy," Myrnie exclaimed, feeling very much disgraced.

Mrs. Adams saw that she was making headway. "I have been trying to get a divorce from that man for six months. He has fought me like a tiger, and said I never should have it. But he allowed the decree the next day after he took you for that drive. That you may interpret as you please. I feel it my duty to lay his case plainly and frankly before you, then you may do as you like. No Glendale teachers promised to go to the orchard with him. Ah, but he is clever, is W. P. He

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really is a wonderful judge of human nature. He perceived that you are a careful girl and would not go alone with him on so slight an acquaintance; he knew also that the story about the orange blossoms would capture you, he did not doubt but that you could be caught with flowers." The lady laughed knowingly.

"Evidently his scheme was a good one, and worked just as he planned it," Myrnie said a little resentfully.

"Know him? I know him like a book. Glendale teachers indeed! There is not a girl in this country, except some stranger like yourself, who would be caught with him. They have all heard about the Tyson woman. Do you know, Miss Leston, when you first appeared on the horizon, I thought you were the Tyson woman come back in disguise. You resemble her some at a distance, but of course you are much more beautiful than she was."

"I do not know of whom you speak, Mrs. Adams." Myrnie was horrified and dazed.

"No, of course, you don't know," and she laughed merrily. "Well, she was a sport he took up with here in town, and when I made it too warm for them, he goes to Los Angeles and she to Georgia. But after a month, my detective in Los Angeles wrote me that W. P. was running a rooming house over there, and Miss Tyson was his manager. I soon broke that up. He came back here then, but not before Miss Tyson had stolen his three hundred dollar diamond. She then disappeared. I would fix her, if I could find her. It was then that I commenced my suit for divorce. I wish you would promise me, Miss Leston, that you will not be seen with him again. This is for your own good."

"I shall never go with him again, Mrs. Adams. I am



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very grateful to you for this visit. I am so glad I found him out." Myrnie was very much overwrought; the enormity of his sin was dawning on her.

Mrs. Adams arose; she wore the air of one who had gained her object. But she looked more pale and broken than when she had come in.

"You must come to see me," she said, when she reached the door. "I have two of the loveliest children in the world, even if W. P. Adams is their father. Oh, he can be a good man when he wants to, Miss Leston." Great tears rolled down her cheeks, and for a moment she was utterly broken. "He is not all, all bad," she added—ready to defend against another. Myrnie went with her to the fence.

"This is W. P.'s buggy," Mrs. Adams, said, laughing and growing wickedly mischievous. "I stole it the evening before I got my divorce; found it hitched in front of a saloon. Good thing I did not wait twenty-four hours longer, or I should have had no right to take it. Like to see him get it from me now," she called out in triumph, as she waved a parting salute at the quiet girl at the gate.

Myrnie went to her room, and sat in deep thought for a long time. She felt this woman's triumph over her—the hardest thing in life for a woman to submit to. Myrnie did not like others to form her opinions for her. It had always been her great fault, her English aunt had frequently told her, to doubt everything she was told relating to life, unless she could prove it for herself. This disposition had led her over many stony ways, and had been the cause of many a hard fall, but still she followed the path bravely. Even when a child, she had a mania for proving things. When told that wood alcohol was

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Yard. No matter how clever I think I am, she smokes me out. I was down at the house this morning to see the children, while she was here I reckon—I saw her drive up from this way. She tied her horse to the fence and came round the back way. I slid out the front door, jumped into her buggy and drove away without her seeing me. This is my rig; the little mischief stole it from me. I do not expect to keep it long, now. She will manage some scheme to get it from me. She outwits me every time."

"Yes, Mrs. Adams told me about that, and much more," Myrnie answered.

"But say, Miss Leston," Adams broke out pleadingly, "do not count this time. Do please come with me this last time. I need your company this evening—I want your advice—I must talk to someone. I swear you are the only woman I have ever known who made me feel the need of being a better man. Guess I have been a devil all my life. If you will come with me, I promise to drive on unfrequented roads, so Bertie will not see you with me."

"I am not afraid of having Bertie see me with you," Myrnie ejaculated.

"Oh, yes, you are; you are afraid." Adams had found his lead.

"I promised Mrs. Adams that I would not go out with you again."

"Oh, she wrung that promise from you, I will wager," and Adams was laughing again. "I can give that woman credit for being clever."

"And pretty," Myrnie added.

Adams looked at her in surprise. "Pretty? Ten

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nature spoke to her, and she resented the fact that Mrs. Adams had taken advantage of her at an impulsive moment, and had wrung the promise from her not to go out with her husband again.

"I just do not believe he is so awfully bad," she wilfully told herself.

The girl was sitting on the veranda in front of the house that afternoon, enjoying the warm winter sunshine, when Mr. Adams drove up to the gate. He jumped from the vehicle with the nimbleness of youth, tethered his horse to the post, and sauntered gaily up the path. There was no coldness in the smile with which Myrnie returned his beaming salute. She invited him to come up and sit down.

"Had we not better start at once?" he asked, feeling very sure of himself.

"I think I have decided not to go, Mr. Adams," with a pleased smile.

"Why not?" He looked his surprised disappointment. "I am sure the weather is without a flaw."

"I had a visitor this morning, who brought me strange rumors. She came in that same conveyance there, and drove that same horse there by the gate," Myrnie informed him, watching a new kind of surprise creep over his face. At first he looked dumbfounded, then puzzled, then the light began to break in upon him. He threw back his head, and broke into the most mirth-provoking laughter one ever heard.

"The little devil, that little devil!" but this was as far as he could get. Still laughing, he tried to explain.

"That woman is the best detective that ever lived. She can beat anything that ever walked in Scotland

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Yard. No matter how clever I think I am, she smokes me out. I was down at the house this morning to see the children, while she was here I reckon—I saw her drive up from this way. She tied her horse to the fence and came round the back way. I slid out the front door, jumped into her buggy and drove away without her seeing me. This is my rig; the little mischief stole it from me. I do not expect to keep it long, now. She will manage some scheme to get it from me. She outwits me every time."

"Yes, Mrs. Adams told me about that, and much more," Myrnie answered.

"But say, Miss Leston," Adams broke out pleadingly, "do not count this time. Do please come with me this last time. I need your company this evening—I want your advice—I must talk to someone. I swear you are the only woman I have ever known who made me feel the need of being a better man. Guess I have been a devil all my life. If you will come with me, I promise to drive on unfrequented roads, so Bertie will not see you with me."

"I am not afraid of having Bertie see me with you," Myrnie ejaculated.

"Oh, yes, you are; you are afraid." Adams had found his lead.

"I promised Mrs. Adams that I would not go out with you again."

"Oh, she wrung that promise from you, I will wager," and Adams was laughing again. "I can give that woman credit for being clever."

"And pretty," Myrnie added.

Adams looked at her in surprise. "Pretty? Ten

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years ago she was the prettiest woman that ever breathed. My God, she was pretty."

"She is a beautiful and charming woman yet," the girl told him.

He looked at her wonderingly as she said this. He was not used to hearing one woman praise another. This must be a new breed, he thought. His own black-eyed Bertie had always disparaged every woman, in her vain attempt to keep her husband for herself.

"Yes, she is pretty—she is pretty," losing himself in thought. "Yes, she is pretty, but a little faded now."

"Very few women are so well preserved at her age," he was told.

"And so she made you promise not to go with me, did she?" Adams was chuckling to himself.

"She did not make me promise, Mr. Adams, I assure you."

"Oh, yes, she dared you to go, and you are afraid, and take her dare. I know Bertie, she has a way of daring people to do things, and they never recognize the dare till it is too late. You took her dare, all right."

"Humph!" was all the girl said, but she was deeply annoyed. During the silence of several minutes, Myrnie had time to think of Fullerton.

"Mr. Adams," she exclaimed, starting up, "I think I will get my hat. This one time I think I will go with you, if you will drive me up past Superintendent Fullerton's house. I wish him to see me with you."

This pleased Mr. Adams immensely. He chuckled to himself. "You must have some old score to pay off, too."

"I have," was all she said.

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Fullerton saw them, of course. They caught him peeping around a door, and they had great sport over it. They then turned abruptly around, and went spinning back on the same way they had come. They soon turned off on an old dim wood-road, at his suggestion, which led them miles and miles out through the mesquite and cacti, and to nowhere.

During the first mile, which was driven in silence, they both knew they had chosen this road through fear of being seen together, and this sent a thrill of shame through them both.

## CHAPTER VIII.

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MR. ADAMS was thinking very seriously now. His wife's visit to Myrnie did not appear amusing at all. No, it was decidedly not amusing. It broke into all his plans, if he had any very definite ones.

"What did Mrs. Adams tell you about me?" he asked abruptly.

"She told me about the Tyson woman for one thing," Myrnie answered.

"I reckon all she told you about the Tyson woman was true," was his sober reply.

"Oh, you admit it, then?"

"Why not admit things, if they are true? Supposing I denied it. You would believe Bertie, anyway."

"Yes, I think I should."

Myrnie was thinking seriously, too. This situation, and the conversation, seemed intolerable to her. She knew she should not be here, and put out her hand, as though to draw the lines and stop the horse.

"Mr. Adams, let us go back, this desert looks so dreary."

"You do not mind the desert. You just want to go back. I know why, too, and it is not fair to me."

"Not fair to you? Why, you took the advantage of me, by making me think I was taking a dare."

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"Oh, well, if you want to go back, I will turn around and do so, but remember, you said if I would drive you past Superintendent Fullerton's house you would go with me and I did so, though I would rather Fullerton had not seen us together. But if you are going back on your promise, all right. But I want to drive yet—that is, I should like to talk to you further. There are some things I want to tell you."

She looked at him pityingly. "All right, Mr. Adams, go on." Her voice trembled, and she prayed to God to be made stronger, and able to meet this thing that he was going to tell her.

He noticed the fear in her voice, and said very tenderly:

"Please trust me, Miss Leston. I wouldn't—wouldn't harm you for the world, and I should defend you against any danger with my life. You do not know how you affect me. You make me want to be good. It is not that you preach at me, but you seem to understand, and that is so much help. Then you are so good yourself, and I see in you the natural reward of right living. I do want to be an honorable man." His voice was trembling more than hers, and he could hardly control the last words. She looked into his eyes, smiled kindly, and they drove on.

After awhile, he spoke again. "Dora Tyson was rather a sweet girl in her way. She satisfied my desire for diversion at that time. Of course, I have forgotten her long ago." He did not know that these casual words sent horror to the girl's sensitive nature. His own conscience was so calloused, it could not know the more



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sensitive dictates of right living. He laughed a little at some piquant memory, and continued:

"Nothing seemed to amuse Dora so much as tormenting Bertie. That girl had her completely wild all the time, and Bertie hated her worse than any girl I ever made love to. Dora sent Bertie some letters, in which I had spoken of Dora's heavenly blue eyes; I think that was the bitterest pill poor Bertie ever had to swallow. She never did care as much if I looked at a brunette, but, oh, a blonde, a 'nasty, washy blonde,' as she always called them."

Myrnie was struggling hard with herself. In all her young life such morals were unknown. Mr. Adams appeared to be a just man, after his way of thinking. She felt it her duty to help him. She wished to put him right.

"I am sure your wife was justified in her feeling toward the woman, Mr. Adams."

"Yes, but Bertie has always been so insanely jealous, and is to this day, even though we are divorced. I suppose it is the 'vigorous vintage of old Spain' that flows through her veins. She has Castilian blood, you know. But I do not believe I ever should have gone astray, if Bertie had not expected it of me. She always mistrusted me and threw the vilest accusations at me, before I ever thought of looking at another woman. She used to spy on me, and follow me, and even hired a girl to try to tempt me. I was as true as steel to that woman during the first years of our married life, but she finally drove me to dishonesty by her mistrust of me."

"That was her very great mistake," Myrnie answered, but she was getting a better idea of the manner

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of man before her. She believed him to be one of those uncertain individuals, who instinctively know what you think of them, and live up to the expectation in each case.

"Bertie would not bring those Tyson letters into court. Did not even show them to her lawyer. Her plea is for non-support and cruelty, of which there is no shadow of proof. She never mentioned infidelity. If she had produced those letters, she might have had her divorce long ago; they reeked of infidelity, but, no, she was too proud to have it appear that I cared for others. Nothing but her tiger jealousy brought her to you this morning. She does not care for your welfare, as she told you. She was only fighting for herself, and trying to defeat me. How desperately that woman has fought every attachment I have ever formed. She has always beaten me, too, and kept me for herself, in spite of my best efforts."

Myrnie leaned back in the carriage, closely observing him, as he sat revealing a wife's tragedy in his devil-don't-care way, laughing here and there at the most vital points. She had an idea, and wishing to test it, remarked:

"Why, Mr. Adams, that woman is a heroine, can't you see that?" He gave a guilty start, which showed his surprise. He could say nothing, and the girl went on, "She has been fighting to protect her children, and has had no one to help her. I admire her for refusing to bring so vile an accusation against the father of her children. Can't you see that she felt a need of being free from you, and yet she would not disgrace them? A mother's strongest feeling is to protect her children."

He did not reply, but Myrnie thought she saw his eyes

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grow filmy and moist, as he looked over the broad desert before him.

"I have always thought," she went on, to further test her idea, "that a jealous person only judges another person by himself. He accuses those about him of being untrue, because he himself receives undue attention."

Mr. Adams was up in a minute. "No, no," he protested quickly. "No one could ever make me think such a thing of Bertie, not for one minute. No, sir; she cared only for me, and has always been as loyal and loving as a wife could be."

"I believe you love her to this day, Mr. Adams."

"I do," he said, facing her. "Do you think I could cease to love her so soon? I—she is—that is, well, she has borne me two lovely children, and I have lived with her for fifteen years. I respect my wife, that is, Mrs. Adams, you know. I respect her very highly. But I am sure I could forget her in time, and love some one else just as much."

"But why seek another when you have her? Why, Mr. Adams, did you ever become untrue, and spoil so much happiness?"

"Why—well that—strange as it may seem—is a thing I can not explain, or even understand myself. But, hell, how can a fellow help it? There are so many charming women, wanting to be loved. They come around a fellow, and put themselves in his way, and make themselves so attractive. It is such rare sport capturing them, and taming them. Far better than shooting big game. Oh, I reckon I am just a mean devil. I reckon coming from Tennessee has something to do with it. I was reared in Tennessee," he laughed, and went on:

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"I have never in all my life seen a pretty woman that I did not want to make love to her, not that I care for them for any length of time, but I believe it is something like this; before marriage, love is full of that witching glamor of romance. After the babies come, that vanishes, though you love your wife dearly. But life becomes a bread-and-butter proposition, commonplace and insipid. I have never wished to lose sight of romance, and by these flirtations I have been able to keep romance deliciously near. Now I should prefer to remain Bertie's husband, and have her and the children to satisfy the father instinct in me, which instinct I seem to possess in full measure. And still I want full freedom to flirt, and drift back into boyhood at times. Flirting makes a boy of me, and I have above all things dreaded to say farewell to boyhood. Oh, I am just a mean devil; I have no excuse to offer for myself. I have been entirely to blame."

Myrnie thought over this for a time, but said nothing. She could scarcely comprehend it all. But she took up a new line of questioning.

"Mrs. Adams told me that you did not grant the divorce till after you had driven me to the orchard, and that no Glendale teachers ever promised to go with you on that trip."

"That is all very true, but I wonder how under the sun that woman ever found that out." This seemed very funny to him, and he had to take his time to laugh over it.

"She told me she knew you better than a book," Myrnie added.

"So she does. Bertie is not a very bookish woman. She doesn't know many books. But that first evening,

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after I met you and conversed with you, was my first intention of letting her get her divorce. And, considering myself as good as divorced, I thought there was no harm in telling you I was. Bertie was the most surprised and crushed woman in the world that next morning, when I gave in suddenly, and the thing was done before she realized it. She did not want a divorce, did not think I would ever let her have it. She was simply giving me a scare, as she thought, schooling me not to go after any more Tyson women. She got caught up with for once. But, to tell the truth, I never thought I should consent to the separation till after I had met you that first evening. I had intended to go to Bertie, make her some promises, and have her withdraw the divorce business. I was in the court room that morning when the divorce was granted. The woman looked liked death. I pitied her. I went to her afterward, and said, 'Bertie, I have a carriage here and will drive you down to the house, as soon as not, if you wish.' She was pale and trembling, and could not speak, but she came with me. As soon as she was in the carriage, she commenced to cry. I have never seen any one so utterly broken. It hurt me more than I can tell, to think she was not my wife, not my Bertie any more, as I sat there looking at her grief. She begged me never to marry again, said she would follow me to the end of the earth, and kill the woman if I ever did. But I told her I could make her no promises, that this was all her own doing."

"Did you have any intention of keeping the promises you said you would have made her, had you asked her to withdraw her plea for divorce?" Myrnie asked.

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"Can't say that I thought anything about keeping them," he told her.

"Then how could you make such promises?" she asked angrily.

"Well, for the sake of my children. I love them with all the strength of my being, and oh, Miss Leston, how they do love me. This morning, when I went to leave them, they clung to my neck and begged me not to go away. They can not understand why I must go. I could hardly tear myself away from them." The man sighed wearily.

"But," interrupted the girl, "why did your meeting me have anything to do with your allowing the divorce?"

Adams sat nervously fingering the lines, trying to smile; but his smile was a failure. It was only a forced puckering of the muscles about the mouth, he only "pulled a face" as children say, for his mental attitude was not a smiling one.

They had stopped the horse far out in the midst of the desert, but were in the shade of a clump of trees where there was a spring. Here tall cat-tails grew, and a few late, purple and yellow flowers bloomed. The desert spread its forlorn lap about them, far and wide. The sun still beat down hot, parching the stubborn desert growth everywhere, except in this shade; here was rest and some verdure.

Myrnie looked steadily at her companion, expecting an answer. After a little, he looked at her soberly, and, clearing his throat, said,

"I may as well be truthful, since this seems the time of telling the truth. I felt after I knew you, that if I could win you, I could easily give up wife, babies and

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all. You are my affinity." He took her hand and held it firmly looking into her eyes.

She was mystified. She could not understand this, and, allowing him to keep her hand, said, "Oh, no, Mr. Adams, I am another man's affinity. He said so and I could not be the affinity of two men. You are mistaken."

"You are the only woman who ever inspired me with a desire to lead the right kind of life. I felt it from the first moment I saw you. I seemed fully to see the folly of my past life and I wished to live differently. You could change my life. You lift me to my highest and best. I still have hopes of being a good man."

To his dismay, the girl from whom he expected sympathy just now, made the desert echo and ring with her amused laugh,

"But, Mr. Adams, your wife would follow me and kill me. It is pretty dangerous diversion you are seeking now, to satisfy your craving for romance. Think of it. How absurd."

"Is it so absurd that a man should love you?" He was a little piqued.

"But think of the difference in our ages. Do you think a young girl like me with all the eager hope of living before her would take a man of your own age to reform him? How selfish you are. Poor Mrs. Adams."

"Who is the man who called you his affinity?" His Tennessee blood was raging.

"He? Oh, he, well—I am engaged to be married to a young man in Nova Scotia. I love him very much." Surely that God did not register this lie against the girl.

"Of course, fool that I was to hope. You are too good for me. I know that well."

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"If you really want to be honorable, and to lead the right kind of life, there is but one thing for you to do, as I see it," she said.

"Marry my wife," interrupted Adams. "Perhaps she would not have me now. I have grown careless of my dress of late years. I used to take great pride in my dress, and how Bertie doted on me. Said I was the handsomest man in the world. Yes, how she petted me and flattered me. Guess I will dress up and go and win her over again." Since he thought his effort to win this girl was hopeless, he turned his thought into an entirely different channel.

"If, as you say, Mr. Adams, I have any good influence over you at all, that influence would cause you to go back to your wife and children. That would have to be your first step in any attempt to lead the right kind of life. Your idea about me was only one of those foolish impulses about romance, and clinging to boyhood. You can be a boy in spirit without doing those foolish things. Your clandestine experiences during your wedded life have brought you no real happiness. What have they brought, indeed, but shame and suffering to yourself, and to those whom you love. Those idle wanderings after other women, and what kind of women have they been, and what have they given you that could take the place of the pure love of your little babies? You are a good man, Mr. Adams. You love your family dearly. You have proven that to me in many ways this afternoon. You are a good man, a good man. But you will reproach yourself always, if you do not go back to this good woman. Poor Mrs. Adams."

She turned her back to him and looked far off. The



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awful silence of the desert enveloped them, and made their thoughts burn within their brains. Myrnie felt that she must scream. This strain was too great for her. Was he right? Was she right? Or had all the things she had been taught been false? Those principles upon which she had based life and happiness; had they lied to her, had they covered the truth from her? His arguments had impressed her deeply; sometimes she had almost thought he was right, but she had not dared to give up. She must prove that her theory was right, for it seemed best to her. Again she prayed to be made strong.

"Did you say that I am good? Is there any possibility of future goodness left in me," he asked, deeply moved.

"Why, of course there is, Mr. Adams. Through all this veneer of filth with which you have allowed yourself to become covered, I can see the really good man that you really are. You wish to be honorable. I understand it all so well. None of this has really tainted your soul; it can all be cleared away, and then you will be the good man that you started out to be. Romance and boyhood are conditions to be kept near. You have only taken a wrong path to find them. We all have this dual nature. I have it in full measure—"

"You, you?" he broke in.

"Yes, me. But he who is wise will not let the bad that is in him run rampant. Evil must be overcome with good. You are no worse than the rest of us, only you have been unwise."

These words Myrnie remembered from the lectures her English aunt used to give her, and she used them now in her extremity and perplexity.

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He laughed in a relieved way. Myrnie did not know the comfort her words had given him. He spoke abruptly, carried away with a new kind of buoyancy.

"I have never known before to-day what I have been seeking all my life. Now I know that I have always wanted to be just and honorable. I am the kind of man who must be led aright by the hand of some woman, and that woman must believe in me. To-day you say I am good. By George, I think you know more than all the rest of them. Disreputable as I have been, there have always been times when I longed to be led aright, and I believe this is true with even the vilest of men. But so few know how to lead. To-day I find that woman. My secret desires have mostly been good, but no one ever gave me credit for that. You are the only one who ever knew it. They all told me I was the meanest devil alive. My old step-mother used to try to beat it out of me. Bertie has preached sermons about it, but they did not believe in me, or give me any encouragement to be better. A man must be led aright by the angel-hand of some woman, be it mother, wife or sister. Mine has been the sister." He put his hand caressingly over hers, then took it up and kissed it, to which she did not object, but smiled gratefully at him.

"I can not tell you what this conversation has been to me," he said. "You have allowed me to open my heart to you, to let out all its pent-up ideas. These I have carried about with me for years, and they have scorched and burned me. I did not know what to do with them, but you have been broad enough to listen, to weigh them, and to interpret them aright for me. Where is the other woman who could have listened to

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all I have told you, and still have had patience and charity for me? And you are so young, so young?"

Myrnie slid out of the buggy and left him to himself. He had praised her for her charity? If he had known the cost, he might have praised her still more. She went to the spring and gathered the straggling flowers, as they nodded their heads and smiled at her.

A man past middle life sat in the carriage sobbing over wasted youth. There had been no angel hand to lead him. The sound of his sobs came to Myrnie now and then, and made the desert wide and dreary. But when she looked into the hoof-hollowed pools of crystal water about the spring, and saw the reflection of the great dome of the sky, and the purple daisies bending over and peeping at her through these mirrors, the sheer joy of youth and being came over her, and she forgot the man as completely as though he had never existed. She commenced to hum and sing softly.

She was only a little girl now, and commenced talking to the daisies, as she plucked them from their stems. "Does it hurt, poor little flowers for me to pull your heads off, when you have worked so hard to grow? Well, you know that is just the way this life is. But you will have something to do now, out here in this lonesome desert, so set to work and grow some more. We mortals are only a manifestation of strife, we live by strife and—," her philosophy was cut short, for the man was by her side. His face was firm and peaceful; bending down, he said, "I am giving myself up; I am going to do right, and you are going to guide me always. Will you?"

"Always and forevermore," she promised gladly. On

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the way home, they talked it all over and laid their plans, and were very happy. Mr. Adams wished Myrnie to go to his wife, and tell her how it all happened, and that it was she who had caused him to reform. But Myrnie would not agree.

Mrs. Adams must never know that another's influence had caused him to seek her in reparation for his wrong. The course must be straightforward and frank.

In a few days Myrnie called on the widow, and made known her mission. But Mrs. Adams boasted loudly, and snapped her pretty eyes, saying,

"No, I shall never live with W. P. again. I have my divorce, I fought him till I got it, and I mean to be free from him forever. Not if he went on his knees to me would I listen to him."

She wagged her head and vociferously announced her firm resolutions, but Myrnie knew the boasting was too loud to endure. She knew that her pride, and not her heart, was speaking. To save her the humiliation of a complete breakdown, Myrnie hurried away and left her alone with her sorrow.

In a few days, Myrnie met Mr. Adams on the street. He told her joyously that he had been to see Bertie twice; that on the first visit, she had made him go into the dust on his knees to her, and that he had done so gladly; that she had sent him away with a very tiny ray of hope, but that on his second visit, she met him at the door, and kissed him, making love to him during his entire stay. He further added that the wedding would occur in a few days.

"She is a little brick of a woman," he chuckled, as he

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tipped his hat, and hurried away, like a boy with his first sweetheart.

“Old fools are the biggest fools,” the girl said to herself. Perhaps she was just a little piqued, because Adams seemed to have dispensed with her altogether, even as the angel-guiding hand. She gave a tiny, little sigh, remembering that this man had paid court to her gallantly. He really looked very handsome, she thought, and was one of the first to rejoice when they were quietly married a few days later. It is reported that they had no further troubles to air before a curious public.

## CHAPTER IX.

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MYRNIE did not see Superintendent Fullerton again for a week or more. He had been absent from town during her last two visits to Professor Stiner's house. No doubt, most girls would have made a detour around his place of residence, and thus avoided him altogether, but this was not like Myrnie. She still kept the same path, and chose to ignore him. About a week later, after passing his house on her way home, she was startled by hearing some one running up behind her. Turning quickly, she stood face to face with Fullerton. Looking at him with a smile of derision, she walked away from him, but he was not to be foiled so easily. Instead, he trotted along beside her, and commenced talking, or rather whining:

"You may elude me and ignore me if you wish, but I am bound to talk to you, though I shout into deaf ears. You may think you have a right to treat me in this way, but you have not. I am sorry for my conduct of the past, and I wish, and *deserve* forgiveness. I swear to you that I never did the like before, but there is something so devilishly bewitching about you, you would take any man off his feet. The very first time I ever saw you, I was filled with the same unquenchable fire, and I say that it is no more my fault than yours. You put on

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your prettiest airs for me, and send your eyes through me, and there is that damned witchery in your skin."

She stopped short, and glared at him. "You lie, Mr. Fullerton; I do not put on airs for you, or any one else. I was in no way to blame for your misconduct, and I do not care to know you."

"But I promise faithfully to be good, if you will but give me another chance. I am willing to acknowledge my part of the fault, and let bygones be bygones. Let us start a new friendship," he pleaded.

"Then you will have to shoulder all the blame, for none of it is mine," she told him, still vexed.

"I will take the whole load of it, gladly, if you will but give me a chance to square myself," he wailed, with actual tears in his eyes. His repentance seemed so genuine, Myrnie took him at his word.

"I am willing to accept your apology, and will give you one chance more," she answered, "but remember what you said; remember your promise." She shook her finger at him, and perched her head on one side like a bird.

"Yes, yes, I remember the promise, but stop shaking that finger at me, or I may break my promise this instant. I never allow any woman to shake her finger at me," and the Superintendent seized her finger and put it down, returning to his old time jollity.

He went home with her invited, and walked on air. That evening they sat on the veranda and talked "shop," as he said, till quite late. It was the one subject on which he could be entertaining. He explained to her all the "ups" and "downs" of his work, discussed at length the wretched condition of some of the outlying districts,

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and the incompetency of some of the teachers until even Myrnie enjoyed the evening.

In a few days, Fullerton visited the school again. He was louder than ever in his praise of the teacher, and even the children began to consider it overdone. They looked at each other, and winked, while those who sat near enough, whispered to each other and laughed. If the Superintendent could have heard them, he would have heard something like this, "Grandmammy Fullerton is sure gettin' bughouse," or, "Ain't he plumb cracked?"

The children departed for their various homes at the close of the day, but Fullerton still lingered, telling Myrnie that her work was too valuable to be wasted on the desert air, and that next year he should use all his influence to have her placed in one of the best positions in the city schools. The teacher sat at her desk, engaged in writing. She thanked him warmly, without raising her eyes from her work, and remarked that nothing could gratify her ambition more than that. He became instantly hopeful, and rushed up to her in a whirl of excitement, seizing her shoulders in his iron grip, while he almost whispered in her ear: "I'll tell you what, little girl, you be good to me, and I will see that you prosper."

She was on her feet in an instant, and, taking up a long pointer that lay near, was ready for defence; but he took to his heels. This was the last time he visited the school that year.

Myrnie gathered up her books, and walked home with flushed cheeks, and points of steel in her eyes. They looked black now.



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When Mrs. Long met her at the door, she quickly asked, "Whew, what has happened?"

"Enough has happened. That Superintendent will know that I do not want him to visit my school again."

This threw our jolly landlady into merriment. "Oh, that's nothing, child. I know Fullerton of old; there's a little teacher out at Glendale who almost goes into hysterics, at the mere mention of his name." As he never crossed the path of Myrnie again, except in the presence of others, he had no further opportunity of annoying her, but let us hope he found some one to love him in after years.

Myrnie noticed that Stiner's mind was undergoing some change. At first, she could not account for it. He manifested a greater interest in her music, in truth a greater interest in her in every way. He told her that her natural talent as a violinist was far above the average, in fact was most remarkable, and that if she would give up all other pursuits, and devote her entire time to the study, she would, without a doubt, make a great success.

"I should superintend your work for a few years, then you should go to Europe to be finished." He stood by her as he said this. His handsome face grew dreamy, and the sensitive mouth curved into a smile as he continued looking at her. Myrnie blushed consciously, and rather liked him better than before.

"I have been thinking," he said, walking to the other end of the room, "of making a great change in my life. Things as they are, are altogether unsatisfactory to me."

He changed the subject abruptly. It was time for Myrnie to go. He went as far as the gate with her, and

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pressed her hand in a parting handshake; a proceeding unusual, and altogether unnecessary, Myrnie thought. But these advances from Professor Stiner were not altogether unpleasant to Myrnie. That evening, as she sat alone in the moonlight, she indulged in the most delicious day-dreams, in which she and Mr. Stiner alone figured. And yet her thoughts were only those of an ambitious and attractive child—his confidence in her ability was alluring, while he was the stepping-stone to the success of which she dreamed.

The next time Myrnie came, Mr. Stiner hurried through the lesson, and resumed the conversation of the previous meeting.

"I think more seriously of making the changes of which I spoke the other day; in plain words, of getting a divorce from my wife, and starting life on this side anew."

"Oh, no, Mr. Stiner, please do not do that," Myrnie pleaded.

"Why not?" he asked quizzically. "Look at my life as it is. I am in a state of perpetual longing. I want my family, but my wife refuses to come to America, and I cannot live in Germany. Would it not be better for us both to break such a tie, and form new ones. I am willing for her to do so. I am sure there is some one else for me. Of late I have been thinking that perhaps there is such a thing as 'the affinity.' Those who understand each other perfectly, and find such sweet rest in each other's society, must be affinities, don't you think?"

"Oh, Mr. Stiner, those things are easily imagined, don't you know?"

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"Well, my mind is quite made up. I have been thinking of this for a long time, but you are the only person to whom I have mentioned it." He strode about the room his hands in his pockets.

Myrnie was growing sick of the word "affinity." Owing to her recent experiences, she was able to discern which way the tide was drifting, and her one purpose was to stem it in time. She crossed the room, and with down-cast expression, stood looking out of a window.

"What on earth makes you look so miserable?" he asked, coming near.

"Well, it looks as though love and marriage is all a sad failure; I have always believed it to be a strong and holy tie."

"Young people often have such ideals shattered," he told her.

"Are they only ideals? Are they too high for attainment in this world?" she asked, still looking outside.

"No, no, love is not a failure at all, nor is marriage always," he replied, studying her closely.

"Well, I should hate to think so. I want to believe in those things, because I am going to be married myself soon, and should dislike to expect a disappointment."

This declaration almost deprived him of his breath. He underwent several shades of color, and strode about the room more briskly.

"Yes, yes, of course," he replied, more to himself than to her. "Every girl must fall in love and marry. That is only as it should be. Yes, of course."

He came up to her, and looking at her with all tenderness, said. "Tell me all about it, all about it."

"Oh, there is not so much to tell. A young man

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whom I love very much is coming here from Nova Scotia this Spring, and it will happen then."

The young man from Nova Scotia was becoming a living reality to Myrnie, despite her truthful nature.

"And you love him?" he asked, very tenderly.

"Oh, yes;" Myrnie's blush came in good time. That evening, as she sat in the gloaming, the hero of her day-dream became a dashing knight from her native land, and he swam the Gut of Ganso every night, and made love to her from under her window.

The perplexed girl crossed the room to avoid the dreamy look of the musician. She stood before the portrait of a richly dressed woman, with two beautiful children.

"I beg you, Mr. Stiner, before you take such a step as you spoke of a few minutes ago, write one more letter, asking your wife to come to you. Look at these darling children. Must they grow up, and never know a father as I have done? Ah, you know that is a hard, bitter fate. And you told me they were natural musicians. I beg of you, Mr. Stiner, write one more letter."

He came, and looked at the portrait from over her shoulder, but she moved away, and took a seat on a divan in a dim corner of the room. Everything was failing her; she could not distinguish wrong from right anymore. Everybody was disappointing her, and she was telling lies to set people right.

Presently he came, and sat by her side. "Yes, you are right. I will write one more letter," he said gently.

"Then do it this minute. I am tired, and will wait here till it is finished. I will drop it in the office as I go by, and it will leave town to-night."

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He obeyed her, and before dropping it into the slot, she copied the address on the envelope. That night, she worked until midnight on a letter of only four pages, but she had forgotten much of her German, and was compelled to frequently refer to her German grammar or dictionary. When the letter was finished, it was one long appeal from one woman to another; from one sister to another, though the sisters had never met; they dwelt on opposite sides of a great ocean, and spoke in different tongues.

Myrnie's message followed closely upon the heels of the other, across the vast water to the fatherland. Despite all that men say to the contrary, women are not always such inhuman beasts to one another.

But the student thought it wise to give up the music lessons for a period, after this interview with her teacher. A Teacher's Institute was to be held at Prescott during the two weeks of midwinter holidays, and this gave her an excuse for doing so.

While in Prescott, she became better acquainted with Superintendent Jilly, of that county, and he assured her that she could get a position for the coming year in his county. Mr. Jilly was a man of high repute, and a gentleman in every sense. Myrnie felt this would be far pleasanter than again teaching under the affectionate Mr. Fullerton.

With considerable reluctance, Myrnie saw the two weeks of vacation come to a close. She had stopped with Bessie, who was now married to one of the "little operators." But vacations, like all things which have a beginning, have an end.

On the return to Phoenix, Myrnie wished to resume

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her study of music, which gave Professor Stiner great joy. She entered his studio unannounced. He was seated at the piano, his rugged head thrown back, his glance piercing the walls, as it were, playing "Midsummer Night's Dream;" his nimble fingers were dancing over the keys, like fairies themselves. The student stood looking at him in silence. Her heart ached a little; she wanted to fall in love so badly—deeply and earnestly in love—and this man was unusually congenial to her. But he turned, as though he felt her presence; their eyes met, expressing the pleasure the meeting gave them.

"Bless, your heart," he said, coming to her with outstretched hands. She did not resent the demonstration. There was in it an element of purity which she felt and understood.

"They are coming, they are coming!" His joy was not greater than hers, and for the moment they were two jubilant children. Their actions would have appeared undignified outside of Arizona. But here the motive outweighs the act. He tossed a letter into her lap, written in German, and filled with declarations of love and encouragement. It stated that a woman and two children would leave the Old World, and come to the New, with the breaking of the Spring. Again there was demonstration of joy. He looked into her eyes, and thanked her, knowing from what she had saved him.

"My children shall know you, and love you, and my wife—," but at this point he could say no more. It was a joyous lesson that day, interrupted by such outbursts as these: "What a wonder this country will be to those two tots. They must be very inquisitive by now," or, "They will be afraid of the Indians at first, and Julia,

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too; but, of course, they will soon learn they are harmless. No doubt they will be trying to play with them before long;" or, "I know that you and Julia will be the best of friends. I must get a nice place, and have it all ready. Next winter you shall live with us, and when your young man comes from Nova Scotia, we will give you a fine wedding at our house."

Myrnie noticed that he made no further plans for her higher education in music.

She smiled, but felt a little foolish, when the young man from Nova Scotia was mentioned. Mrs. Stiner did come to Phoenix, but she and Myrnie never met.

## CHAPTER X.

---

LIFE in the West was beginning to modify Myrnie's attitude toward the world. She was an extremely impressionable creature, and all unconscious of it. Her sympathy was abnormal, and liable to lead her to almost any length. The surroundings in the West were new and strange to her, altogether different from the East. There, where protection seemed scarcely necessary, she had been unduly shielded. Here, in this wide open country, where even the most astute often find themselves in need of defence, she had been cast upon her own resources. Perhaps there is no more evil or danger in Arizona than in any other land, once you become acquainted with Western ways, but the habits of the people make it appear so. There is less visible protection there.

Mrs. Long had performed her part, in influencing the girl's thoughts on many subjects. She had diligently poured into the horrified ears of Myrnie, the numerous accounts of liasons, scandals and divorces which happened at home, as well as those she could read of at large, and, as stated before, her store of such news was not scant. The widow always commented upon these narrations, and moralized according to her way of thinking; though Myrnie had long since ceased to accept Mrs. Long's moralizing, she was, no doubt, influenced by it



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more than she knew. She considered Myrnie's innocence a poor asset for a woman in this day and age, and her aim and desire was to enlighten the "poor thing."

Myrnie's ears grew less and less outraged upon hearing these things. Perhaps the world, after all, was not the place of great achievements and honesty, which she had supposed. This disappointment left a void, for which she had not yet found a substitute.

Each individual dwells in an intellectual realm of his or her own making. Myrnie was being led out of her own pure world of thought, into the mental mazes of others. She was left much to herself in these days of breaking Springtide. Her music teacher had gone to New York, to meet and accompany his family to the West. Mr. and Mrs. Adams moved to Texas, to start life anew; her experiences in Phoenix, however, had only been a testing, and a means of proving some things, to which she still held fast.

Myrnie was learning to study people and she had studied her landlady closely and considered her a good average of the world at large. This lady was kindness itself and did everything in her power to benefit her boarder's material comfort. Myrnie liked her very well on the whole, but refused to accept her "advanced ideas" as the widow was pleased to call them.

Mrs. Long was a tall brunette of a rather robust make. She possessed large hips which wobbled as she walked. But her walk was a saucy swagger, for well the lady knew how bewitching widows always are. But one side of her body seemed always to be a little in advance of the other. Perhaps she took a longer step with her right

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foot than she did with her dainty left or perhaps the left foot was the more modest of the two and the right was to blame for the "advanced ideas." At any rate, this gave her a very self-assured bearing. The dear widow was inclined to be fleshy, but she ate sparingly, struggling nobly to keep down her avoirdupois.

She had a habit of frequently speaking of the many differences between blondes and brunettes. Brunettes were far more fascinating than blondes. She would tell you. Brunettes had more power over the male sex. Did she not know this of a certainty? Sure she did. Dozens of men had told her so. Blondes were wishy-washy and were sure to fade very young.

This dashing young widow was preparing for her third wedding. She had the day set for her next birthday, when she would be forty, but I am sure she looked scarcely twenty. She never told people how old she was and she thought no one could ever, ever guess, but I am sure that a real good judge would have known that her fatness was the fatness of forty. One of her former husbands was dead, the other was running at large, and she had the day set for a third; and now she was busy most of the time making underwear for the occasion.

"I do not care much about my wedding dress," she told Myrnie, "but I am going to blow myself on underwear. I shall be married in a plain white dress that I wore last summer, but just you watch my smoke, for I shall blow myself on underwear."

And so she did. I wish you could have seen her underwear. Piles and stacks and tills full, and all of the finest. Silks, linens, lawnsdales and cambrics, all bedecked with the finest laces. In short, it was underwear

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to make your mouth water, everything that goes to make a woman bewitching, and in these garments you may be sure the widow looked resistless.

But who was to be the lucky fellow? Who indeed? Of this the widow was not quite sure herself. She had set the day, but had not yet decided upon the man. She was promised to three "dandy" fellows. Those three she held in escrow; she would decide perhaps at the last moment. These admirers of hers were the veterinary, whom she called the "Doctor," a red-faced meat-cutter, and a farm-hand who worked on a nearby farm. This one was aged twenty-three.

I am sorry I cannot tell you which of the three she chose, for I never heard myself, but I always had a feeling that it was the farm hand aged twenty-three.

By preference the little school teacher courted her own society in these days, and tended her peaceful little school. She was trying to adjust herself to her new impressions, and as a consequence was mentally dishevelled and much cast down at times. Life in the big world of experience which she had been so eager to meet was wanting when weighed in the balance with her expectations. Spring-time was breaking rapidly about her, and Springtime will bring its sunshine, its flowers and its bird song, so that in the face of all this she could not be melancholy very long.

After a time the perplexed girl became more accustomed to looking at life as it was. She reached a more settled state of mind which expressed itself thus: "I can do right if others do not, so let it be," and she went on minding her own affairs.

Mrs. Long's son owned a fine black horse, but as the

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boy did not care for riding, preferring to farm instead, and the horse needed exercise, Myrnie was given free use of the animal. Much of her spare time now was spent on the back of this splendid creature. At first she did not venture beyond the limits of the town, not being an experienced rider, but she was gaining confidence every day. Of an evening she could be seen thus mounted, prancing along the shaded avenues of the capitol, now by parks where fountains played incessantly, now by long rows of cottages and fine residences.

Soon the girl extended her horseback journeys into the country, sometimes riding miles from the town. It was on one of these solitary rides that she met an old-time friend.

She had galloped along the Salt River for a mile or two, when a man also on horseback coming from an opposite direction, drew up his mount and extended a friendly hand in greeting.

"Why, Mr. Harmon," she exclaimed, and the expression of pure delight on her face could not be mistaken. Fred was happy to see that look in her eyes.

"I have been in Phoenix a month," he told her after the preliminary greeting. "I am now returning from a trip into the Bradshaw mountains, where I have been examining some manganese outcroppings. I have some parties on the string who want a manganese mine."

"You have been in Phoenix for a month and have never been to see me, although you knew where to find me? Now I call that real mean."

"I have inquired often enough from a jolly old friend of yours, and I always received such glowing reports that I concluded you did not need me. You know I

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wanted to call badly enough, but you rather gave me to understand, I thought, that my absence was best, therefore I desisted from the pleasure. But how do you like Phoenix?" he asked.

"Maybe I like it a little, but I am sure I never liked a place so little," was her reply.

"Come, tell me what is the trouble. If any one is mistreating you he will have me to answer to," he told her.

The girl had been wishing for some one to whom she could unburden her heart, and this meeting by the very nature of its unexpectedness was prone to draw forth such a confidence. They dismounted and sat on the grass in the shade of the newly leafing trees, while she told him of her various experiences.

Fred said little while she related what had occurred in the cases of Adams and Stiner. He looked at her wonderingly from time to time as though this was a new kind of woman to him. But when she came to Fullerton and labored hesitatingly through the unseemly tale, trying to make him comprehend what had taken place, he grew pale and frantic. He arose, striding about on the tender grass, grinding it with his heels. At length he took her by the hand and drew her to her feet. "Poor little lonely girl," he said. "This is an outrage, but you let me know if that brute ever speaks to you again and I will break every bone in his lobster of a body. You are a little heroine, so well have you borne yourself!"

The girl rejoiced and rested, as it were, in this arm of strength which was so opportunely reached out to her. Fred stood looking into her face, realizing how hopelessly and desperately he loved her.

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"Poor little lonely girl," he said again, and she raised her eyes wistfully to his.

"And here is another lobster claiming a look from you. What are you going to do with me?" he asked, smiling easily.

"But you do not bother me; you are just a nice, kind friend to whom I can come with my troubles. Don't you remember you told me I could always do so?" Myrnie had forgotten that she had told this man that he was "not a very nice man" upon the same occasion; to-day he seemed the cream of all good men to her.

He took her hand and pressed it firmly. "That is what I am and shall be," he declared.

On their ride back to town it was agreed that Fred should call for Myrnie on the following Sunday evening and take her to his home, that she might meet his wife. Surely neither realized the breakers ahead!

Fred was happy in spite of himself. He had firmly resolved to be the Platonic friend, but at stray moments he found himself harboring the most ridiculously delicious hopes. He tried hard to put them from him, but that was impossible. He would keep believing that at some time, in some way, Providence would come to his aid.

That night he told his wife of the little friend he had invited to see her, and of his having met her the summer before. He ended by saying, "I am sure you will like her. She is so gentle, and her presence cannot bore and tire you as so many people's do."

"Why have you never told me of this charming creature before?" she asked, suspicious of the animated way in which Fred had spoken, though he had tried his best to be matter of fact in the telling.

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"Why Amy, do I tell you of all the girls I meet in my travels? As you may imagine, I meet many girls, good, bad and indifferent. I had thought no more about this girl till I met her this morning, and she seems such a nice person that I thought you might enjoy her company. There are so few people you can endure at all."

"Well, may be I shall like her, but it is doubtful. Girls are such featherheads these days," she said peevishly.

However, Sunday evening brought Myrnie to the cottage on Center Street where the invalid lay. As she was ushered into the room by the nurse, she saw a thin, pale woman reclining on a brass bed which was dressed scrupulously clean. The under sheet was pinned down so tightly and smoothly that not a wrinkle could be seen in it. If there had been one harmless little wrinkle, this fastidious person would have known it and would have given the nurse no peace till it was smoothed out.

Large snowy pillows, with covers handsomely trimmed, held the woman in a half reclining position. She wore a white silk robe in lieu of a night dress, and that too was a thing of beauty with its rich frills of lace. A white coverlet of exquisite Mexican drawn work was thrown over half of her figure, she having just thrown it back, for the room was warm. A boy of about nine years played on the floor with a multitude of toys, a whole toy shop full, it seemed. These toys made the only litter to be seen anywhere.

Myrnie was introduced to the invalid by her husband, who after playing a minute with the boy, went into the study, leaving the two women alone, except for the presence of the boy.

At first the invalid stared at the girl in a half stupid,

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half admiring way, then she lifted a small jeweled hand in a half-hearted greeting, and her listless face smiled a little. Myrnie noticed that her expression was drawn and emaciated, and indicative of one who suffers from ennui and a small mind.

"Fred has been telling me about you," she said. "I am glad you called. Take that chair. Draw it up close to me, so we can talk."

Myrnie did as she was invited, but her natural impulse was to draw the chair away from the bed.

"I am sorry to find you so ill," the girl attempted to make conversation, "But Mr. Harmon tells me you are often quite well."

"Oh, yes," she finally drawled. "This is only one of my bad spells; goodness knows, I suffer enough at best. I am on the mend at present, and hope to be up in a few days."

"What seems to be the nature of your trouble?" Myrnie asked.

"Oh, nervous prostration for one thing. Goodness knows my husband is to blame for most of that with his stubborn ways and contrary actions. Wallace there worries me nearly to death too, though the Lord knows the child is all I have to live for. That litter of toys drives me frantic at times, but you know I have to let the little fellow play. I enjoy having him play here where I can see him, and I watch him for hours at a time. I can remember when I was a child like that and had my mother." She thought pensively for awhile and continued. "Then I have stomach trouble, kidney disease and a torpid liver. The doctor says the action of my heart is very defective and the circulation very imperfect. My nerves are wrecks. I have had six operations for internal troubles, but oper-



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ations give only temporary relief. This is the first real bad spell I have had since last July. On the day of the Fourth they thought I was dying. I go to Los Angeles in Summer to escape hay fever, but this climate is best for me in winter." Thus she repeated her ills and counted them over proudly. Few could support such a train.

"Do not ever be so foolish as to marry, child. I can see that your health is perfect now. A man is to blame for all a woman's ills. I just hate all living men. All the good ones I ever knew died."

Myrnie made no reply to this. She looked around the room and saw that it was richly and elegantly furnished. Every comfort seemed supplied. A row of books stood on a shelf just above the bed within reach of the invalid. Myrnie could read the titles, and she saw that most of them were by Corelli, a few by Gunther, and one or two by Carlyle. She also observed that most beautiful hand-made embroidery was everywhere. These had all been made by Mrs. Harmon, besides a big box full of the same work which was shown to Myrnie during her visit.

"Yes, they are beautiful," the invalid said in response to the girl's praise of them; "and I do prize them highly, but I nearly lost my eyesight at the work, so I do very little of it now."

The little boy came and stood by Myrnie, looking up into her face inquiringly.

"Oh, good evening, little man. What is your name? Eh? How old are you? Eh?" but he would answer none of her questions. She drew him up on her lap, where he sat picking at her hair and pinching her cheeks perhaps to see if they were real cheeks. He poked a finger into her bust with, "What's that?" His mother's

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bust was very flat and he did not comprehend this projection. His mother ordered him away, but he paid no heed to her. Myrnie saw that the child was a copy of his mother about the face, but his manners were those of the father over again. He was not at all a precocious child, being a mere baby of five years in ways and talk.

After Myrnie had told all about herself, her past as well as her future aims, which information Mrs. Harmon drew from her by a volley of questions, she prepared to go home, lest the strength of her stay tire the invalid. Mrs. Harmon promised to call at Mrs. Long's to see Myrnie as soon as she should be able to do so.

"I have met Mrs. Long at Mrs. Murphy's card parties," the invalid remarked, "She is one of those widows I can't endure. She will cheat to beat anything you ever saw if she gets the chance, and she manages about that always."

Wallace accompanied Myrnie and Fred back to her place of residence, and when the child came home, his mother called him to her and pumped him concerning the conversation which had taken place between his father and the young lady during the drive.

A spirit of deep depression seized and held Myrnie for the remainder of the evening, and that night she dreamed of the place of torment. She did not comprehend this melancholy. It was not usual with her. "Poor, poor man!" she said to herself over and over.

This gloom was simply the shadow of unhappiness which had been thrown around her during her visit to the pessimistic invalid, and Myrnie being susceptible, had carried some of it home with her.

## CHAPTER XI.

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"How do you like Miss Leston?" Fred asked his wife when he returned.

"I could not say on so slight an acquaintance. I never form my opinion of any one on the first meeting," Mrs. Harmon said in an animated voice.

"I do," was her husband's reply.

"That is because you are rash and impulsive and foolish. I suppose you think she is pretty?" eyeing him closely.

"Yes, I think she is very pretty, don't you?" This time his face told her nothing.

"She is fresh and healthy looking," Mrs. Harmon admitted, "and I suppose that is beauty as men see it. But I always look deeper than that for beauty. Those who have souls are beautiful to me."

"I should say Miss Leston possesses a soul, if any one ever did," Fred told her.

"You would not recognize a woman's soul if you met it in the big road. But that girl is sensible enough not to be boresome, I can say that much for her."

"That would depend on what kind of a soul it was, Amy. I think I should recognize the kind that is made of leather if I saw it in the road."

"Oh, yes, that is the way when I try to have a sensible

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conversation with you, you always delight in foolishness." And the woman closed her lips tightly.

Wallace had sat in thought all the evening, and this was unusual, for he was by nature a regular chatterbox. He came to his mother when he was in his nighty and ready for bed, and asked, "Mamma, was that girl the Beauty Lady?"

"Ho, ho, no, darling. Why do you ask that?" the mother replied.

"Because I think she is, mamma, she is so beautiful;" but he got no audible answer to this. His mother kissed him a number of times and sent him to bed. The Beauty Lady was the heroine of a fairy tale, which was the child's favorite of all the stories his mother told him. The Beauty Lady was reputed to possess all the virtues as well as great beauty.

Mrs. Harmon was out of bed in a few days. She seemed well enough, and went about at ease like one who enjoyed good health. Her eyes were bright and her cheeks had a hint of color in them. She gained in flesh and enjoyed a good appetite. Such was the mystery about her chronic illness; it would come on suddenly, and at such times it would seem that she must die. All at once she got up and went about looking and feeling as fine as could be. Her physicians were sorely puzzled with her case, and insisted that her mind must in some way be responsible, but this the woman denied stubbornly.

"I want you to take me out to see Miss Leston this evening," she said to her husband one day at dinner.

"Do you think you are strong enough, Amy?" he asked, kindly.

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"You know very well that I am strong enough or I should not ask to go, so why that question?"

"It would be rather inconvenient for me to take you to-day; I must meet some men on important business after dinner."

"Oh, well, postpone the meeting. It is not often that I ask for any of your precious time."

"I will ask Douglas to drive you to the country; I must see these men," Fred told her.

"No sir, you shall not push me off on to Douglas. You shall go yourself. Now that settles it. I do not believe you have an engagement at all." The woman was half ready to cry, and that did settle it. Fred saw the men hurriedly and appointed another time for the business meeting, though it was most inconvenient for all parties concerned, and he drove to the country with his family.

It was Saturday and they found Myrnie practising on her violin. Of course she had to play for them, and while she played, alas, Fred forgot to guard his telltale face. Mrs. Harmon scarcely heard the music. She was watching her husband. Never before had she seen that wrapt expression on his face, half ecstatic, half melancholy. At times it lit into rapturous luminance, corresponding to the liquid notes which the girl drew from the instrument as she drew the bow lightly and gracefully across the strings. Her own face changed with the music as she bent and swayed to its passionate measures. Some will understand when I say it was Schumann's "Traumerei" that she played. Fred sat in pensive thought for a while afterwards, then he grew over-talkative, and to cover the awkward position in which this left them all, Myrnie

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suggested that they go out to see the little lambs in the corral.

Mrs. Long's son, with his farming instincts, had converted the few acres of land behind his mother's house into a farm. He had, among other live stock, a few sheep.

Wallace was wild with delight when taken inside the corral. The lambs surrounded him and rubbed their wet little noses against his hands and face. Then he had a race with Myrnie, and a lot of fun with the baby sheep, while the parents stood by the fence and enjoyed the sport as well.

The sun spread its good warmth over all the earth, the grass was fresh and green, flowers bloomed along the irrigating ditches and the birds tried to excel each other in their song; it seemed to Fred that earth had never before expressed so much happiness.

The party went back to the yard, and the parents sat on a rustic seat while Myrnie and Wallace played a ball game of the girl's own invention. How the boy screamed with delight when the game went his way, as Myrnie contrived to make it!

Of all this girl's pretty ways, there was none more charming than her way with children. She won her way into the hearts of children as readily and naturally as she did into the hearts of men. And to play with children, she often declared, was one of her chief delights. She proved the truth of this statement when she played their games. Perhaps it was not mere play with her. The years slid back a decade or more and she became a child in spirit and in looks. At such times she grew mysterious,—believed in Santa Claus and in fairies and went

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chasing through woods and under hedges to seek them out. She became as imaginative as a child, till the children she played with felt no difference between her and themselves. And how fondly they loved her!

Mrs. Harmon remained silent all the evening. She was still absorbed in the study of her husband, and was too keen not to get an inkling of what his preoccupation indicated.

Now he went to lean on the fence near the players where he could get a plainer view of the animated face which every minute grew more rosy and more and more lovely.

His wife called him to come with her to see some flower beds in the back part of the yard, as though to draw him away even for a minute. She claimed to be interested in the way the borders were made and wished some like them herself. He refused to go, however, declaring his interest in the game. She then screamed at him, and he went to save a scene. While they were beyond earshot of the players, she said:

"You act like a loon over that girl; can't take your eyes off her for one minute."

With a start, Fred thought of himself for the first time, but merely said, "She is certainly entertaining Wallace. They make a healthy picture,—like two children, instead of only one."

"Yes, you are fond of health in others, but for you, I should have had my health to this day."

"Why, what do you mean, Amy?" he asked in a hurt voice.

"Don't 'Amy' me. None of your business what I mean. You take me home at once."

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"Come, Wallace, mamma says it is time to go home," he called as he went back to the seat. But the woman stood, a gaunt figure of pale rage.

"I don't want to go home," Wallace sang out.

"Come, come," urged the father.

"I will not do it," the boy yelled back.

"Wallace," his mother called, and the child began to cry.

Myrnie suggested that they stay till it was cooler, remarking that it was not late.

"She is even trying to rob me of the love of my child," the woman said to herself, and her anger grew apace.

"I say I wish to go home. Who makes suggestions to me?" A greenish pallor overspread her face, and in a minute she was vomiting. Fred was alarmed; he ran to her and held her head, while Myrnie brought restoratives, and the woman soon recovered.

When Myrnie expressed her sympathy, Mrs. Harmon snapped her up. The girl was bewildered and Fred was embarrassed, but he dared not make excuses for his wife for fear of her reproaches.

Wallace had continued to cry more loudly as his mother grew ill, and now still stood whimpering, which he continued all the way home, notwithstanding that his mother shook and slapped him soundly.

"If that girl is a decent person, then all signs of nature fail," she ripped out as they drove along. "Where indeed did she get that figure? Virgins do not develop in that way."

"Oh, Amy! I think you should be ashamed of that speech," Fred exclaimed.

"I should be ashamed all the time, of course, accord-



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ing to you. Entertaining Wallace! Yes, she cares a lot for Wallace. I can read her there. That is only a ruse she has to trap you, and you, like the fool you are, bite."

To this Fred said nothing. He knew that what he should say would only make matters worse, so he sat doggedly on the edge of the seat and drove the horse dutifully. When they reached home Wallace came to his father, and putting his arm around his neck, held him tight with these words, "I want to love you, papa," as he always did when he heard him being scolded.

Mrs. Harmon went to bed immediately, and there she stayed for three days, to pay for her uncontrollable temper. But, of course, Fred was entirely to blame for this sickness, as he was told every time he came into the house.

Upon these occasions the man would hurry from his house as soon as he could. He wished to spare his wife the vexing sight of himself. He tried to discern what the future might hold, but only fog met his vision, dimming every object and outline. There appeared one bright path in view, but that path, by the established rules of morality, was foresworn to him. He tried to keep his eyes from wandering in that direction because these forbidden glances only made life harder for him; but ah! this avenue was alluring in the extreme. He feared that a time might come when his strength would fail him, and he should rush headlong into the glories of this dream, heedless of consequences.

## CHAPTER XII.

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MRS. MURPHY, bosom friend of Mrs. Long, gave card parties to a certain set who considered themselves the "four hundred" of Phoenix. Do not smile at the idea of Phoenix having its four hundred. Every community, however sparsely populated and insignificant so far as society is concerned, has its exclusive members. Let six shipwrecked persons escape to a desert island and set up a colony there. In three days the four hundred of the number will, by some mark of superiority, have set itself apart and have made its influence felt. This is one of the strong straits in human nature. To return to Mrs. Murphy. She lived in a magnificent house, large roomed and spacious halled, which served as a most delightful rendezvous for this particular set of would-be four hundreds. With her whole-souled, Celtic disposition, she always contrived to make every one comfortable. You could not look at her, or step inside of her house, without feeling something of the atmosphere of comfort which she reflected.

Mrs. Long had often tried to induce Myrnie to accompany her to these functions, her hostess having urged her to bring her young friend, but Myrnie would never consent to being numbered among these people, since, according to some of Mrs. Long's reminiscences of what

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took place, and of what some of the gentlemen had said to her, the girl considered them a bit too smart for her.

"Honey, please do come with me this time," the widow pleaded. "Your friends the Harmons are to be there, besides Judge Murdock and his bride and the Secretary and his daughter."

Myrnie was a bit interested. She sat ruminating for awhile.

"All right, Mrs. Long, you may telephone Mrs. Murphy to count on me this time. I believe I should like a little dip into the 'four hundred' of Phoenix." And the evening of the party found the girl quite eager to go. She went with Mrs. Long and the "Doctor."

This seemed like society indeed to Myrnie, but she felt conscious of being gowned more plainly than the other ladies present. She did not mind this, however, because she was the youngest person in the number. But rich silks and lace dresses were plentiful, to say nothing of jewels and diamonds.

Myrnie wore a cream crepe dress trimmed with black velvet. The cut of the gown displayed to advantage her fine figure. Her arms, beautiful as you can imagine arms to be, were bare to the elbows, about which fell rich frills of lace, but on her arms and hands were no adornments. Her wonderful hair was fluffed and piled high.

Simple as was her costume, how far she outshone the ladies with whom she was contrasted during the evening! This fresh young beauty needed no artificial adornment. That larger personality and individuality spoke, making her presence felt. She reminded one of Venus with the lesser stars around her, and every man present felt this fact in one form or another.

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Which do men admire most, tight-laced figures, with paint and powder and gewgaws, exhaling that odor of experience, or a calm, full face resting in a bloom of youth, an unconscious innocence, clear, truthful eyes, sweet tender mouth, and wrapped in the atmosphere of stainlessness? But her quiet, dignified composure did as much for her as did her natural refinement. She had to be introduced to most of the guests present, and the gentlemen, naturally enough, looked searchingly at her and managed to exchange a few words with her. But this disconcerted her not at all. She knew the way to the hearts of all these men if she would but choose to find it. Men never embarrassed her. The women alone did that.

Mrs. Harmon greeted her coldly and with surprise. Fred changed his demeanor at once from that of bored reserve to animated jollity, of which, of course, his wife did not fail to take note. When the tables commenced to fill by fours and sixes for the games, Fred walked over to Myrnie and asked her to play with him. "Come," he said, "let us trim the Judge and Miss Florence."

"I shall be glad to play with you, Mr. Harmon, but I am afraid you are choosing one who can help you win few honors. I know so little about bridge. I never do keep track of the cards, it is too great a strain on the feminine mind." Several who were near laughed heartily at this, but Mrs. Harmon stepped up and told them that Mrs. Murphy had the tables all planned. Such was indeed the case, but the plan was overruled in this instance.

By this time they were seated and cutting for the deal amid loud talking, joking and laughter. The dining-room and library opened into the large parlor, and tables

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were placed in these three rooms at comfortable distances. The house was lighted brilliantly. Flowers artistically arranged were everywhere in profusion, permeating all space with their redolence. The roses, more fragrant than the others, held out their blushing faces inviting kisses, proud of their early appearance, yet diffident.

Gayety of a free sort was evinced from every quarter, and laughter unchecked rang through the cheerful house. In no group was there greater merriment than at the Judge's table. Of course there were those tables where they played soberly and with deep interest, but this was not the rule in regard to anything in Mrs. Murphy's house.

Mrs. Harmon's position commanded a full view of the Judge's table, and she kept a sharp eye out for what was going on. Her partner, who had played the game with her before, knew her to be a champion. In fact, she had helped to carry off the first prize at the last three parties she had been able to attend, but on this occasion, he noticed that she manifested no interest in the game. She sat most incessantly, and others began to notice her abstracted moments and speculate as to the cause. Her face wore a strained alertness and her eyes were the eyes of one who listens intently. She was almost beautiful in this flushed and excited watchfulness, but the game suffered. She played the ace of trumps on her partner's king.

How different with Fred. He was having the time of his life, his partner was winning with him, they were playing hand in hand. One thing did upset him a little, and that was the good time his partner contrived to have with other men. Fred wished she would save all her smiles for him, but she would divide them. Of the single

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men he had no fear; only the married men were bothering him.

At the close of the game it was found that Fred and Myrnie had made the score of the evening, and the prize was awarded them. After this, partners for refreshments were drawn by lots through an ingenious invention of the hostess, which device caused much laughter.

As luck would have it, Fred drew Myrnie, and much sport was made of the coincidence. Mrs. Harmon had drawn a whimsical bachelor, one Todd Payne, who, although not over popular with the ladies, was a very bright man nevertheless. This bachelor had been smitten with Myrnie from the first sight of her, had taken inventory of the charms with which nature had so generously endowed her, but it had not as yet been his good fortune to get more than a word with her.

"Lucky dog that your husband always is. Of course, he was sure to draw the girl I had hoped to get," he complained to Mrs. Harmon. "Not that I do not appreciate your company, but eligible men like being thrown with eligible women, you know, and particularly women of that rare type."

"I can see nothing rare about the type, Todd, and I take no offence if you want to know her. We can arrange the thing nicely." Mrs. Harmon spoke smilingly. "I want to be with Fred this evening, and I am sure Miss Leston would prefer you to Fred, so we will just go over and change partners."

"No, no," Todd protested, but Mrs. Harmon was already leading him by the sleeve over to where Myrnie and Fred were laughing and talking.

"We came a-bargaining," the woman ejaculated with a show of assumed pleasantry. "We are both dissatis-

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fied with our lot. I prefer Fred's company for refreshments and Todd wishes to become better acquainted with Miss Leston, so we have decided to change with you."

"Then we have no voice in the matter?" Fred put in, showing resistance.

"Supposing we refuse?" Myrnie asked in the same breath.

"Fate seems to have thrown us together to-night, so I think we had better stay as she placed us."

"Fate, humbug!" And Mrs. Harmon shot a lightning glance at Myrnie, meaning it to shrivel her, but it had not that effect at all.

"I understand this kind of shenanegan, but it does not work with me." Mrs. Harmon took her husband's arm and drew him away. No one else heard this. All were busy finding partners or rejoicing over partners already found. Myrnie and Todd were left alone together; they looked at each other a little perplexed, undecided whether the lady were joking or not, but they decided to treat it as such, and moved away to seek the seclusion of a curtained alcove. Mrs. Murphy's house was full of these cozy corners, made inviting by great heaps of sofa pillows. A little table covered with delicious refreshments was brought them by a maid.

Mrs. Harmon and her husband sat with a group of others. She seemed particularly gay and youthful to-night, laughing and chatting incessantly. Occasionally she shot a triumphant glance toward the alcove where Todd and Myrnie sat. There sober discussion was waging. Both being of the same turn of mind; they had gotten into deep water at once and were discussing the merits of the works of J. M. Barrie, whom both admired greatly.

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At the close of the evening's gayeties, Myrnie and Todd, to the great satisfaction of one present and to the chagrin of others, departed together.

As soon as Mrs. Harmon was alone with her husband, she took his arm coquettishly and hugged it fondly. "I feel so well to-night, Fred, I know I am going to get well and strong, and we are going to be so happy together hereafter."

This statement was so unlike anything he had ever before heard from her that he discredited his own ears for a few minutes. Finally he managed to say, "Nothing would please me so much as to have you past all that suffering, Amy."

"I just feel it to-night, Fred; I just know it. I am going to get well."

To this he said nothing, for the first time in his life being at an utter loss to understand the creature beside him.

When they reached home the eager wife ran away to the sleeping child, but it was not very long before Fred heard her call, "Fred! Fred, come here."

He followed her at once, wondering what she could want of him, and hurried along in the dark, fearing that the boy might be ill. When he reached his wife's room, however, he found the child sleeping peacefully, but his wife was standing beside the child's bed, clad in a dainty nightdress, with her hair hanging glossy and brown about her shoulders, one bare foot peeping from under her robe.

"Just look at our beauty of a child, papa. How sweetly he sleeps! He is so well and strong and just like you, dear; and think, he is just mine and yours." She looked up at him and smiled, but Fred remained grave and



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sober. She bent to kiss the forehead of the unconscious sleeper, and her body touched Fred as she did so, but this contact, instead of producing the effect she desired, sent a thrill of disgust through him.

"Cover him well, Amy," was all he said, then turned and left her, going to his own room, where he commenced to disrobe and prepare for rest. Soon the door of his chamber opened, and he turned to see his wife enter. She perched herself in his rocker and proceeded to rock and chatter about what had taken place at the party. She mentioned Myrnie's name several times in a casual way, complimented her once, as a means of throwing him off the track, as she thought, and ended by remarking that Todd Payne "was fair smashed on her."

"Did you notice the way they found the secluded corner?"

"You had better go to your bed, Amy, instead of sitting out here in this cold room. You know your doctor wants you to sleep in the fore part of the night as much as you can."

"I have almost a notion to sleep in here with you, Fred. You could keep me just as warm." She sat watching her husband as he went about his nightly preparations, but seeing no approval of her suggestion in his bearing, she said: "All right, Fred. I'll go to bed and be a good girl for you." She put up her mouth to be kissed, something she had not done in years.

"Good night, Amy," and he kissed her forehead.

She ran away to her own room and was soon sleeping the sleep of the happy, but Fred lay awake for hours puzzled, and sickened, at the change which had come over his wife in the last few hours.

## CHAPTER XIII.

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"I HAVE discharged my nurse, Fred. Only the maid and Wallace and I have been in the house for the last three days," Amy announced to her husband several days later, upon his return from another one of his extended jaunts of mineral hunting in the mountains. She was sitting on a sunny veranda with her fancy work, dressed in black silk negligé. The loose sleeve of her robe fell back, displaying a small arm and tiny hand clutching an embroidery hoop, wherein the most exquisite orchids grew stitch by stitch, in silk. An animated light shone in her eyes, and a venturesome smile played about her mouth where the dimples used to be. The habitually downturned corners of her mouth had taken an upward trend. All these changes came to Fred with a shock of surprise. He remembered when she had looked like this years ago, as he looked at her long and quizzically.

"You certainly do look surprisingly well, Amy, but don't you think you have acted a bit hastily? Now, do not overdo yourself as you so often do, upon the advent of these times of recuperation, and no doubt you can keep well for a long time."

"Oh, it is plain enough that you do not think I am getting well at all," she exclaimed, as she threw her work in the basket disgustedly; "and that is anything but en-

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couraging. It is only for your sake that I care to get well at all. Will you not help me by believing in my recovery, Fred?" she asked sorrowfully.

"I will do anything to help you, Amy; you surely know that. But do you think my faith can make you whole? What did the doctor say?"

"Not exactly, but it would help some if you seemed pleased to have me well. You go and talk to the doctor yourself. He will tell you that I need no medicine."

"How silly! You know I have always done everything in my power to help you recover. How do you account for this mysterious change? You have taken no new medicine or treatment recently. If you remain so well for a long time then I shall believe that you are really well; but you have always had these spells of temporary improvement."

"I do not try to account for my recovery. I only know there came to me a great desire and determination to be well, and I find myself well. I have never felt like this before when I grew better; I always knew that I would be sick again, but I do not think that way now. Is that not enough?"

Fred was unable to comprehend this kind of talk. He thought soberly for awhile and said, "Well, maybe."

"Her case has always puzzled me," Dr. Morris confessed to him the next day. "I have never had a case like hers. I am convinced that drugs have had no part in her recovery. Her malady seemed to be entirely of the mind. I have always thought that if she could be roused into taking an active interest in the affairs that surround her, become possessed of some kind of joy, or even sorrow,—anything to awaken and stir her out of

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the rut of ennui in which she has dwelt for years, that she could build up and her physical ailments would disappear. But she would dwell in that attitude of dire discontent and complaint, till her entire being and body were saturated with it. The mind has a greater influence over the body than we know. Doctors are finding this to be true, and no one in her state of mind could be well. As near as I can draw from her present condition, she has recently taken a new and a powerful interest in life. She denies all this to me, but to be frank and truthful with you, Harmon," here the physician lowered his voice, "I should say that your wife has fallen in love,—she has every symptom. Now, if such be the case," here the man placed a tender hand on his listener's shoulder, "do not interfere with this new attachment. I know this sounds like awfully queer talk from me, old man, but think what it means to her. It is her only chance of recovery, and it will bring her health, happiness everything,—while if she is thwarted in this affair, death only can eventually result, must follow in the footsteps of ennui, which kills mind and body. Be brave Harmon. Look at the thing sensibly."

A sarcastic smile crept over the face of the wretched man as he stared fixedly into the benevolent eyes of the speaker. He felt a wave of admiration for this man before him. The speech he had just delivered showed that he studied his patient closely, understood her, and was brave enough to broach anything for her welfare. 'This is the ideal physician.

Fred turned from him abruptly, strode about for a minute, then stopped by a window to gaze out. He was the picture of misery.

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“ See here, old fellow, don’t take it that way. Look at it from my standpoint.” The well-meaning doctor went over to Fred and clasped his shoulder, but Fred interrupted him.

“ Yes, yes, I understand all you would say. She deserves her little hour of love and happiness, her day of soul development, as well as the rest of us, and from your theory it would follow that such has never been hers till recently. I understand. One soul’s happiness is worth as much as another’s, and when a life depends on it—yes, I understand, and I promise not to interfere.” Fred went out of the office before the physician could speak further.

It was remarkable to note the metamorphosis through which Amy had passed. Very little of her old self, either in spirit or physique, seemed to remain. She grew round, plump and rosy, almost girlish in appearance, notwithstanding the fact that she was a woman of thirty-five. There was a spring in her walk, almost a swagger, in fact, instead of the weary drag of her old-time gait. She sang snatches of love songs, as she went about the house giving cheerful directions to the maid. She began to take delight in the happiness of others, and sympathized deeply with those in trouble. Flowers absorbed her, the blue sky, the song of a bird, the green growing things in the garden. At last she was alive to this sparkling world of ours, was awake to its thrilling touch, while but a short time back, she had been as one dead. Glory be to God, she *lived!*

With this new participation in existence came a powerful instinct and desire to protect and guard that which she valued, and with cunning forethought her eager fin-

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gers reached out into the future and pulled a wire here and there. For example, numerous tales of the Beauty Lady were being poured into the excited ears of Wallace, but alas, wonder of wonders, the enchanting being who had in all the former tales been the incarnation of all that was good and holy was surely going to the bad.

"But mamma," the child would protest, in the midst of a thrilling tale, "you forget, mamma, that would not be so. She would not pinch the babies to hear them cry. The Beauty Lady is only good."

"Yes, she did do that very thing," the artful mother assured him. "Perhaps she is turning bad, after all."

"No, no, please, mamma. Let's not have her bad. She is good, don't you know that, mamma?"

Notwithstanding the poor child's tearfully earnest pleadings, his designing mother continued to besmirch his ideal, tearing down the idol of his childish fancy, and erecting on its pedestal a something vile. She who had been the creator of his angel now proved its destroyer.

The little fellow finally broke down one day, after hearing how the Beauty Lady had torn down the fence of swords which the fairies had set up in defence against their enemies, the bears and lions. Before the wicked animals could be repulsed, they attacked the fairies and devoured a great many of them.

"Mamma, do please tell me just one more story in which the Beauty Lady is good again; 'cause I can't live at all if she is bad all the time," was the unhappy boy's last plea.

"All right, honey, dry those tears, and I will try to make her good again." He clapped his hands and screamed with joy, whereupon the mother launched her

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delighted and expectant listener into the intricacies of a dense jungle, where the fairies had flown far, far from their enemies; but alas! the wicked Beauty Lady found them out and led the beasts to their hiding-place.

"So you see," she told him as his under-lip quivered, "she will be bad in spite of all I can do." I wonder that the woman could have had the heart, but she was peering far into the future.

After this all memory of the good the Beauty Lady once had done was gradually erased from the child's mind. He began to look only for the bad in his fallen angel, and helped his mother devise means of punishment for her.

Some days later, Wallace accompanied his father up-town, where they happened to meet Myrnie on the street. Fred engaged her in a short conversation, but Wallace, contrary to his former inclinations in regard to Myrnie, ran on ahead before she could speak to him. He hid behind a post and watched them nervously, with a lurking fear lest the girl cast an evil spell over him or his father. His mother's trick was admirably effective. Piqued, and jealous of the child's affection for the young woman, who was to him the personification of all the fabled virtues of the Beauty Lady, she had succeeded in poisoning his thoughts against her by working on his easily impressionable mind. Hence, the newly awakened wickedness in the Beauty Lady!

Mrs. Harmon began to devote herself completely to pleasing her husband. She prepared with her own hands those dishes of which he was especially fond, and brought them to him the acme of delicious perfection. She frisked away like a girl to get his slippers for him. She made

him the most enticing den in the corner of the library and allowed him to smoke there, a thing he had never dared even wish to do. She dressed herself attractively for him, came and sat on the arm of his chair, and leaning on him, would read his paper with him from over his shoulder.

Fred paid little heed to all this. Sometimes he chided her for doing work that she paid the maid to do.

"But, Fred, I really do love to do these things for you. I am well now, you know." This kind of argument got the better of him. He would be compelled to succumb and thank her for her kindness. She tried to heap affection upon him in a hundred little artful ways. This, too, drew from him only cold complacency. She now demanded that his evenings be spent at home with her. These were his most trying hours.

One starlight night he sat alone on the veranda, fighting with himself as but few men do struggle with their baser natures, resolving every minute to love his wife and to make her happy; but his truant desires would as often go galloping away to a face which to him, when he looked into it, was alight with the effulgence of purity and all that there is in this world for man, till his soul was aflame with a sacred passion.

His wife stole softly to him and cuddled down in his lap. She pinched his cheek, then smoothing the hair away from his brow, kissed him gently. Her kisses traveled about over his face till they came to his mouth, and there they lingered. The fragrant odor of carnations hung about her. Fred had noticed this same perfume about his loved one. Strange that his wife should have it. She had never used anything but violets before. He



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closed his eyes and fell to dreaming. If this were only Myrnie. Oh, God, if she would only fondle him like this! His dreams led him on and on. Condemn him not. He was only flesh and blood,—only man.

His arms tightened about her and his imagination led him still further.

"Come, Fred," the woman whispered, and led him to her chamber. The room was very dark and the odor of carnations still entranced him.

"Love me, Fred. I am well now. Let us go back to the old way of life. Love me as you used to long ago. Please, please, Fred."

She had her way with him. He drifted back with her into the old days. Later he awoke with a start to realize that, though he had tried to love her in the old way, he had failed. God! and how great was the failure, he knew only when he looked at his wife still sleeping beside him, and loathed her. Yet he pitied her, too, as every man must pity the woman who begs him for his love. How unworthy he felt! There could be no going back now. He went to his own room and tried to sleep, but his heart was tearing his side. He arose, and after dressing, walked forth into the night, directing not his steps nor caring where they led him, until he found himself a mile out of town walking back and forth past a cottage on the Yuma Road, where the sacred slumbered.

Wretched and miserable, still he strode near the house, back and forth, to and fro, till a big dog came plunging out to where he was and set up such a barking and howling, that he stole away quickly like a thief, lest someone would come to see what the hubbub was about. He bent his steps homeward a little comforted, for he had

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been nearer to her. As he walked along in the dim light his thoughts ran into unreal courses. He wished that he could walk on and on to the end of forever, forget this life and all that had belonged to it, and come at last to a golden isle where *she* should be waiting for him. His mind was uplifted to its highest and best. Love gives wings to the imagination of even the most prosaic. On this night he realized the truths of life as he never had before. He determined to foreswear that which was too high for him. If he could live in the same world with her and see her once in a while, and have her smile at him sometimes, yes, that would be heaven.

"Poor Amy," he said, "Poor Amy," as his thoughts recurred to his wife.

Weeks went by in which Fred and Amy lived after the manner of their early married life. He petted her and fondled her, and tried to drift back into loving her. She began to feel highly flattered to think his love had endured the long, weary years of abuse she had showered upon it, never giving him a word or act of kindness, let alone love; and now, when she so desired, it stood at her beck and call.

Little she knew of the conflict raging in the heart of the one who now called her "dear," nor did she dream of the lonely, nocturnal pilgrimages to the cottage a mile away on the Yuma Road.

Fred told himself that there could be no harm in his taking this stroll. It gave him comfort, and he would indulge himself thus far. He bribed the big dog into friendliness with a pound of beef which he bought for the purpose, till after a time the big burly fellow looked eagerly for visits. He would come bounding out to see

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him, his busy tail wagging, and a dog's smile over his face. On nights when Fred did not come, the dog sat and howled to the lonely night.

But soon these solitary hours of adoration failed to satisfy. He wanted something more tangible, more real. He began to long for the presence of his loved one, or at least a word from her. There were nights when he could see a thin streak of light beneath her window-shade, for he had already found out which was her chamber, and he knew that she slept not. Was she thinking of him? Did he dare hope that?

## CHAPTER XIV.

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ON a shadowy night when Fred stood looking at the streak of light beneath the window-shade, he saw a lithe figure clad in white emerge from a side door under the window and make its way to the garden at the back of the house. He could dimly see the airy shape moving about among the trees and shrubs, nor did he need to be told who it was. It was now past the hour of ten and the other members of the house were sleeping.

Fred followed the figure and came abruptly upon Myrnie as she turned a corner of the path and faced him.

"Oh, Mr. Harmon, how you frightened me," she said. Fred saw her start suddenly as she stopped.

"Then you knew me at once, Myrnie?" he said coming near.

"Yes, I was thinking of you to-night, and you walked right into my thoughts and made them a reality."

"Then it was your sacred thought that drew me. But strange that you should be out here at this hour. You do not prowl this way of nights, do you?"

"Yes, I do, during light moon. I love the moonlight. I was so lonesome and restless to-night; I could not sleep, so I came seeking the calm of yon devout countenance;" and she pointed a slender finger toward the face of the moon.

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"I, too, was restless and could not sleep, but I came seeking the solace of this face," and placing a trembling finger under her chin, he tipped it upward and looked into her eyes. He then turned abruptly as though to check an impulsive action, and commenced pacing back and forth in deep thought, while the girl stood calmly by and watched him.

He came back and stood in front of her hesitatingly, "Will you talk to me? I am in great trouble. Tell me what I must do?"

"But come where we shall disturb no one," she said, leading the way to a little summer-house in a far end of the garden. The grapevines which covered the structure were already in full leaf, sheltering the two figures from view. A propitious wind sprang up, rustling the leaves and branches, and drowning the low tones of their voices with its murmur. She seated herself in a low chair and pointed out a bench to him, which he took gloomily as he asked again, "What must I do?"

She did not ask him the nature of his trouble. Her subconscious intellect seemed to have discerned this. She knew that he suffered and she felt very sorry for him. Myrnie's was too tender a heart. She felt for anyone who suffered, though he be a vile criminal whose suffering was only the just reward of his deeds.

She held her lovely hands out to Fred and he grasped them, pressing his heated face down on her cool palms. His agitation passed; he sighed heavily from time to time and drew from her blessed hands silent comfort.

The girl was filled with wonder at the novelty of this adventure. This must be near to love, she thought. Maybe it was love. Her eyes grew large and sparkled

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the more as they caught the reflection of the stars peeping down through the crevices. An hour passed and no word did they speak. She was thinking of the many romantic tales which Mrs. Long had told her of the illicit love of those who were unhappily married, and she was beginning to think that in some rare cases this may be justifiable.

Presently they were disturbed by a sharp voice in the direction of the house. "Myrnie, where are you? Come here, child."

"Coming," she called back as they both arose. "She'll be out here in a minute," as she started to run away. He still clung to her hands, muttering, "I shall come again Sunday night," but she wrenched herself free and was gone.

"Why will you stay out there in the night air, you little romancing goose, and all alone, too. Go to bed." Mrs. Long's voice was as near a scolding pitch as her voice ever could be to Myrnie.

"Please do not disturb me again, Mrs. Long. I love to sit out in the moonlight and think." And Myrnie's arms went about the tall woman, as she stood on tiptoe to kiss her cheek. She was in rather a sentimental mood just then.

"Tastes differ, no doubt," said our widow. "I could not blame you if you had a sweetheart, but how useless to stay out there alone." If the virtuous widow had but known that such was indeed the case, and that the "sweetheart" was a married man, she would have returned the girl's hug soundly. For that is the kind of a woman Mrs. Long was. Not knowing anything of this, however, she merely sent Myrnie off with a "Go to bed, I am

freezing my toes," and each went to her room,—Myrnie amused at the widow's words, the widow mentally tucking in her stubby toes.

It was Mrs. Long who came into Myrnie's room a few days later in great merriment. "What do you suppose I heard up town this morning?" she asked.

"I can not imagine, Mrs. Long. What was it?" And the girl looked up from her writing in smiling expectation.

"Ha, ha, ha!" How our widow was enjoying herself. "Well, I heard that you are trying to alienate the affections of Mrs. Harmon's husband, that you are trying to break up her home. It is in the mouths of all the gossips. Mrs. Murphy told me. It seems Mrs. Harmon started the trash herself."

Myrnie grew ashen. An expression of fright and embarrassment went over her face.

"What did you say, Mrs. Long?" she asked, trembling.

"I said it was an infamous falsehood instigated by a jealous wife. They have it that you care only for married men, and that you have several times before come between husband and wife. It seems that Fullerton and Mrs. Harmon have been exchanging confidences, and they say that you had the Adams' actually divorced, and the Stiners estranged. I told her the straight of those two affairs, of course, and told her to correct such yarns when she heard them."

"What shall I do, Mrs. Long?" Myrnie had arisen. She was pale and startled. Never before had she heard her name bandied around amongst the gossips. To every woman it is like a tragedy, the first time she discovers that her name is being used in vain.

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"Do, child? Just follow my advice. Do nothing at all. Go on treating Mr. Harmon just the same as ever, a little better, if anything. That sort of truck can't hurt you, child. Fact is, you are not really popular in this town until some such stuff has been said about you. I've had my experience in that line, I'll tell you. I used to cry over it, but I do not care what they say now, and they have ceased to say things about me. Now, how is a woman to help it if she is pretty and attractive and men fall in love, I'd like to know. Do the numb-skulls, block-heads, fools, think just because a man has married some one woman that he is never to care for another? Oh, rot! Such dashed nonsense makes me sick! Whenever you learn, little girl, to live for your own pleasure and not to care for what narrow minds think or say or do, you will have mastered the philosophy of life. If I were you I would make that woman sick of her job. I'd give her something to be jealous of, indeed I would, if she wants to be jealous."

"No, no," Myrnie protested.

"Now, do not be the little chicken-hearted fool you always have been. She has said a lot of other nasty stuff about you, and she is merely aiming to ruin your name. Make it hot for her! I will help you, and see you through. I never did like that woman, anyway, and I would like a chance to get even with her. She accused me of cheating at cards one time, right before a houseful."

"No, Mrs. Long. I could never do anything like that. It would be entirely out of my line. School will be out in a short time and I will be gone, then it will be forgotten."

On the following Sunday night at about the same



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hour, Fred came to the summer-house and waited, but after about an hour, when no one had come to reward his eager waiting, he stole beneath the window where the thin streak of light was visible at the bottom of the shade. He gazed at this light till his neck was tired. Then stooping to the ground, he gathered up a handful of gravel and threw it against the pane.

The troubled girl within heard the sound and started. When another handful of the same again struck the pane, Myrnie went to the window and raised the sash. She saw the figure of the man below and understood. Leaning out the window, however, she shook her head at him, and motioning him away, closed the window and extinguished the light.

He went back to the summer-house. After another hour of weary waiting, hoping against hope that she would change her mind and come out to him, he trudged back to town, feeling that life was too heavy a burden to support. But every night he made his solitary pilgrimage to the summer-house, thinking that she might wander out there again. The strain was beginning to tell on him. At home things were taking a dreadful turn. Fred had been holding to his hard set task, fighting mind, body and soul with all his will power, but the will power was growing weak. During the day he managed himself well enough, but when evening came with its gentle, subtle influences, he was picked up as by a whirlwind and carried to the place against which will power had cautioned him.

And this was a man fully developed in mind, body and soul. He had experienced enough to know what life holds. For him there were no fantastic youthful hopes

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telling him that there would be other loves, that he should let this one go. He felt that in this girl he had seen the "last woman," and there was nothing else for which he wanted to strive. Does God or man expect mankind to forswear the heaven of happiness thus given?

Fred continued to come to the summer-house, but it was not until a dark night after two full weeks of thwarted expectation, when he entered the bower to sit out his hour of holy meditation in that spot where her calm presence had soothed him, that something like an apparition floated before him. He arose and stretched out his arms to see if it were real, and they closed upon the dear form of her he sought. She was drawn to him and kissed many times, hurriedly, before either could speak. This was the first time Myrnie had ever kissed thus, and it sent a strange thrill through her. "This must be love, surely," she thought.

"Myrnie, Myrnie," he whispered, "did you come to me at last?"

"Oh, you must not. Let me go." And she tore herself away.

"But we love each other, Myrnie. Think what that means. This is something more than a matter of right and wrong. This is a matter of life and death to me. Laws were made for others, for those who cannot feel, not for such as we. We are left to make our own laws in these matters, for none can understand our needs but ourselves. We must make our own laws."

"But you belong to another woman and the little boy—,"

"I love you better than all that. I belong to you."

"Stop. I shall hate you if you say that you love

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me better than you do your own little boy." She was thinking of her own orphaned childhood.

"But listen to me, Myrnie—" he commenced, but she again interrupted him.

"No, you listen to me. She is saying that—," he would not let her finish.

"I know all that she says. She rings it into my ears. She tries to win my love now that she fears another. But love that is born of jealousy is not worthy of that sacred name. I hoped for her, for all of us, that I might be able to endure life with her. I forced myself to try,—yes, I drifted back, back,—and I loathe myself for it. I have struggled hard, I have fought myself, oh, nobody knows how hard, but there is no use. I failed utterly."

"Does she know, then?"

"I think she does," he replied.

"Oh, what shall we do? But you must remain true to her if she loves you."

"How can I pretend to be true when I am not true in mind, body or soul? What can be gained by that? You do not know the measures I have taken that I may care a little for her again. I have even forced myself back into the old conjugal relations with her, thinking that some little spark of physical attraction may spring into life that might hold me to her, but there is no use. You are here. This has even made the gulf between us yawn wider to me. There is no going against the fate which draws you and me together."

The girl had drawn away from him in horror. She crept close to the wall to be as far from him as possible, and there she cowered.

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"But you must win. You will. You must not come here. Fred, you have drifted back. I shall not see you again."

"But listen, Myrnie, I know a plan," he said, breathlessly.

"What is your plan?" she asked, gaining possession of her faculties.

He took her hand and drew her down beside him. "I have been quite successful in a financial way recently," he began. "My commission from the sales of different properties has reached over twenty thousand dollars. I have properties and interests which when developed will bring many times more. She is a well woman now, so there could be no shame in it. I will settle on her half I have in money and some permanent income, and get a divorce."

"Enough!" and she covered his mouth with a trembling hand, as though to blot out the meaning of his excited words.

"No, no, no, she loves you."

He drew her hand away and held it firmly. "I shall do it in spite of all you can do, and when I come to you free—?"

"I should not speak to you, should not look at you. You have drifted back; that is the end of everything. Promise me that you will go on in the same way with her. You must."

"I cannot. It is unbearable. I tell you I will settle with her; she is well now."

"My school closes in a short time and I shall go far away from here. You will not know where I am. You can then forget me."

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"But you love me, Myrnie. You must tell me that. Perhaps I could make the sacrifice if I only knew that you love me. You love me, Myrnie?"

"I don't just know. Sometimes I think that perhaps I do. Then there are times when I can imagine a greater love, and I long for that. I often want you with me, but she is your wife, and you have a child whom you both love. Think of the child in the years to come, when he grows up. He will want to think kindly of his father, and what if he can't?"

Fred covered his face with his hands. "Yes, I must try. I must be strong. But tell me as nearly as you can, Myrnie, how you feel toward me, and I shall know if you love me. It will be easier if I know that you love me."

"Well, it seems awfully nice to have some one think so much of me and call me such nice names, and when I think I am necessary to your happiness, that makes me want to be with you and make you happy. But I do not like you to touch me—I do not want you to love my body so much."

Her answer did not satisfy the man. This was not like what he had hoped to hear, still, he thought the girl did not know how to express herself in these matters. If he had told her how he felt toward her, it would have been quite different from this, might almost have frightened her. But after a few minutes of sober thinking he said, "I am sure that is the way women love. That is the highest form of woman's love; all unselfish and pure as snow. So now, Myrnie, my little Myrnie, I know you love me too."

"Oh, do I? How delightful and fine." She clasped

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her hands over her breast and beamed upon him, so glad to be made aware of the fact that she loved him. She had wanted to love some one for so long, and now it had come.

"But you must stay with your wife, you know, and be true to her; since you are certain that I love you it will be so easy." She bent her head prettily to one side like a bird, and she almost whispered the word "love." It was still a sacred word on her lips.

As Fred walked home that night, he was more at sea than ever. He found it impossible to comprehend his own thoughts and feelings. "I will not go back," he said, "I will not go back, *will* not."

## CHAPTER XV.

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Two weeks passed and Fred had desisted from going to the cottage on the Yuma Road. He felt that he had been dismissed once for all. He was courting resignation, trying to accept his fate and put all hope from him; but hope, like the bright star that it is, would shine in its full glow of radiance in this dark night of his life at moments when he was off his guard. He found it impossible to love his wife. He commenced to be less demonstrative to her since he was convinced that the fondling could not bring him nearer to her. Now that his lot seemed cast inevitably with hers, he purposed only to fulfill his duty to her. His own life seemed useless, worthless, a waste, and he was devoid of any interest. Duty dragged without impetus and his only refuge lay in bodily activity. If he allowed idleness to creep upon him for an instant, his restlessness was unbearable. He hoped that perhaps after awhile his wild desires would be somewhat assuaged and that he should be able to live this life of self-abnegation with some degree of tolerance. The creature comforts come to a man's aid in such a crisis.

Myrnie, on the other hand, to her own surprise, began to wish, since she discovered that he no longer visited the summer-house, that Fred could not hold out against

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himself. It was she who now made the nocturnal visits to the secret trysting place, and when night after night she waited and he did not come, her heart grew restless from a feeling of loss which soon waxed into a tense longing, a yearning difficult to comprehend, because it was not real love.

Every girl before she has loved watches eagerly for the advent of that grand passion into her life. She thinks it will burst abruptly upon her like a grain of popcorn exposed to the heat. So eager is she for it that sometimes she thinks love has come when it has not, but never can she mistake its actual presence. What Myrnie felt for Fred was not love. Perhaps she liked being adored by him. True, this was the nearest to love that she had ever felt, and its taste was sweet on her lips. His great and powerful passion fascinated her. Her inexperience exulted in his experience, as her innocence attracted him. But love it was not.

"I really want him to stay with his wife, for that is right," she told herself. "I only want him to come here and tell me how he is progressing." Thus she cheated herself into this delusion until one evening, in a fit of sentimental impulse, she wrote him a note. No sooner was the missive out of her hand, than she would have given worlds to recall it, but the United States mail service, like Time, is stern and relentless.

Fred received the note late in the evening. He walked about the garden in wild joy. The dull earth had bloomed again. Its wealth of color and fragrance was all about him. It was hard to wait for the city clock to chime nine, when he knew that Amy would be asleep. As soon as he was sure of this, he hurried away breathlessly,



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as fast as his legs could carry him. The note had only said that the writer would be at the usual place at the usual hour, but that was enough for Fred.

The impatient man found the girl sitting restfully in the old place. How her calmness and quiet bearing contrasted with his ill concealed impetuosity. He wanted to embrace her ardently, but she would have none of it.

"Sit down," she commanded, and he obeyed like a child.

"You are so good to have sent for me. I wanted to come so badly so many times," he burst out. "You do not know how I have suffered."

"Hush, I only asked you to come here to tell me how you are progressing," she replied.

"I have not succeeded at all. It grows harder and more insupportable every day. I have come to tell you that such a life is impossible for me. If I go on trying to live this kind of life, it will make a criminal of me.. If I wish to be true to anyone, I must be true to myself first of all, must be true to my purest instincts. I love you, Myrnie, always shall love you. I will follow you to the ends of the earth. You love me, too, and want me, or you would not have written this letter."

"No, no, I only—," she tried to speak.

"You need make no explanations. I could not be mistaken in you, Myrnie." His voice was very tender and made her wish so much that she could tell him that she knew quite, quite well that she loved him.

"How can you expect me to entertain any feeling for you now that you have gone back to the old way with your wife? I might have consented before, but now I never—" again he took her words from her.

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"But listen, child, can't you understand that that means nothing to me. It seemed gross, every atom of my body rebelled, but I tried for the best. I did not deceive you in this as I well might have done, but told you all. Oh, little Myrnie," he bent very near her, "can't you see that it all had to be that way? I had to test myself to see if any of the old imagined affection was still alive. Then such things are so different with a man."

The girl knew so little of the things of which he spoke that she did not comprehend what he was trying to tell her. All she felt was that they were having a wonderfully deep conversation, and she enjoyed the idea immensely. She still sat thinking without a word, and he went on,

"Tell me, Myrnie, that I may hope to have you for my own when all is settled."

"But you will tell her to-morrow that you do not love her, and stop this pretended love-making? I cannot and shall not have it going on if it is not sincere. When I think of your having done it I almost hate you." She was speaking wildly. Fred was a little surprised and alarmed at her trembling, heated tone. He had never seen her disturbed like this. Still, even this held a ray of hope; it spoke of jealousy, and where there is jealousy there is sometimes love.

"You must give me time. It may not be best to tell her just yet. Let me have time to drift back into coldness with her. Try to realize that the pretended love-making means nothing to me."

"Time to drift back! No!" and the girl grew vehement again. What Fred took for her woman's jealousy was only her sense of honesty. "It means something to her if it does not to you, and she deserves some consider-

ation." She was looking straight at him. "There will be no sigh of love from you to her from this time on. You shall have nothing to do with her hereafter. She must understand at once that you do not love her. I demand absolute honesty in this terrible affair." (Men will observe that Fred was starting wrong with this woman. Women, take notice.)

The man dropped his head in his hands in dire dejection, and said, "Think how hard you make it for me, Myrnie. It would be better—"

"You find it so hard to give her up when the time comes? Well, you must make your choice now, Mr. Harmon." Her voice was almost dramatic. He put one hand out and it fell on her knee, his face being still buried in the other. He was like one pleading for mercy, for he was thinking how Amy would take it, was trying to picture the scene. He had a kind pity for her and disliked to give her pain.

The girl drew away from him, breaking the contact between their bodies. At this indication of aversion to his touch, he exclaimed, "Myrnie, of course, I will tell her at once. Thank Heaven, you have given me hope at last." And he wanted to take her in his arms, but she said, "No, wait till she knows."

The next morning when Amy wished to kiss Fred, he brushed past her and left the house. At lunch time he avoided her. A difficult and unpleasant task lay before him, and oh, how he dreaded it, but there was no drawing back now. He had set his hand to the plow and must not turn back. Where his sentiments are concerned as under these circumstances, nearly every man is purely selfish. He makes his arguments fit his own case and

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feels that he is justified. When evening came, Fred weeded all weakness and hardness from his heart and sat in the study, cool and decided.

"Fred, what is the matter? You seem so strange to-day." Amy's words came so innocently from her lips. There was a sorrowful, timid look in her eyes as she came into his presence. She stood in the center of the room.

He laid down his paper, looked at her steadily for a moment, then placed his hands in his pockets and leaned back in his chair, searching his mind for words to begin.

"You do not seem to want me near you to-day. Don't you love me any more, Fred? There are times when it seems to me that you can hardly endure me."

He sat up straight, took his hands from his pockets, and placing them on his knees, began measuring his words and looking before him;

"I may as well be truthful with you, Amy; my love for you, real love such as a man should have for his wife, died years ago. Look back over our past and see if you ever did anything to nurture that love."

The woman grew pale and horrified as the full meaning of his words came to her. Still, she looked as though she had expected such an answer.

"But Fred, I love you now. I am well and want you to love me. Am I not kind and affectionate now?" Her voice was an entreating wail.

"Too late, Amy. If you had been like this years ago, it might have been different. But it is too late to-day. I wish I could love you now, Amy, but love does not come and go as the will commands, you know. In the last few weeks I have tried to love you for your

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sake, and you see how I have failed. I do not wish to hurt you, Amy. I shrink from giving you pain, but I must be truthful with you when you come to me and ask for the truth. I am tired of this kind of life and wish to make a change. I shall provide for you always and will leave Wallace with you, but I want a divorce. Can you consent to that?"

Poor Amy dropped on her knees, covering her face with her folded arms at the word "divorce," as though it had been a blow that felled and stunned her. Finally she arose and groped about the room with wide eyes and reaching arms, like one whose mind wandered; then she fell prostrate and broke into wild sobbing.

A realization of the awful thing he was doing smote the man as he walked to her and picked her up. He told himself that he could not go on with this, and tried to soothe her, "Amy, Amy, think, be calm. Don't, don't!" Thus in his arms she seemed dear to him. She had been his care for so many years, and this care had so grown a part of his life that he now felt he could not part with it. "No, a man must do his duty," he was thinking, "must be a man first, and let his heart take care of itself. I shall have to give the little girl up, dear little thing. I can't desert my wife and break up this home; too many tendrils from my heart have taken root around it, and I must accept this fate."

Amy drew away from him and seated herself in a chair. All the spirit had gone out of her, but she struggled to be calm.

"Give me time to think, Fred, time to think. I will tell you when I have thought."

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As soon as she was composed, however, a great part of his selfish love came back to him.

"You can see me in the morning." He arose, took his hat and left the house. He did not come home till late that night. He had been about town.

Amy sat up till midnight waiting for him, but he did not come in until an hour after she had retired. She arose and went to him. A smell of liquor filled the room, but he was not intoxicated.

"Did you mean what you said this evening about, about—about divorce, Fred?" she asked as though it had all been a dream. She stood in the doorway in her white robe, all the color and strength and vigor of the past months' gathering gone from her.

"Yes, Amy; let us say as little as possible about it." Men wish to avoid discussing unpleasant subjects, especially when they are culpable, but women always persist in going into details.

"This home shall always be yours. You and Wallace shall have ample means. I shall come back to see Wallace occasionally. Now go back to bed, Amy, it is cold. I must sleep for I have a long trip into the mountains for to-morrow."

This promise to come back occasionally beamed like a bright light in the future to the woman who had no other hope. She could live then, since she should see him. And who knows but he would grow tired of his freedom, and come back and wed her over again! She had heard of such things, had known of instances when it had occurred. How fine that would be! She went to bed, her heart beating high with hope. To win him back, that was the task she should set herself.

## CHAPTER XVI.

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THE next morning broke clear and warm as May mornings do in Arizona. Fred awoke at six o'clock to find his wife standing over him. He had the feeling that she had been watching him in his sleep previous to his waking. There were tears on her cheeks.

"Your breakfast is waiting, Fred," and she hurried away. When he came into the dining room and took his seat at the table, she sat quietly by and waited upon him and Wallace, who would rise as early as the rest of the household. She waited upon them as they ate, but not a mouthful did she taste herself. The meal had been prepared by her own hands and could not have been more delicious. The conversation carried on between them was pleasant and ordinary, such as might have taken place during any morning of their past married years. Wallace was especially gay and talkative, which helped the parents to feel at ease.

When the meal was finished, Fred bade good-bye to his family in his usual way before going upon a journey.

"I consent to the divorce," Amy said before he departed.

He wanted to tell her that he had decided not to make any change in their lives, but he was not quite sure yet, and wished to give himself more time to think

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and see how he would feel about it since she was prepared to meet it. That day, however, as he rode over the winding trail up the mountain, the dim images of love's young dream came dancing back to him, and when he mounted to the summit and beheld the dim and dreamy stretches of country far beyond, Myrnie again had him in her power, and he was like a feather in the wind.

"Oh, my God, how I love her!" he exclaimed aloud, the figure of the girl with all its graceful motions came before his mind's eye.

"But why does she not want me to go on like this, keeping my home as it is, but having her for my dream angel?" he mused. "My love for her is as pure as the driven snow. I do not want her sacred body; that is, not now. I could live like this for awhile. It would be best so until Providence sends its own way. I do not want to put my fingers into the directing of my fate. 'That pretended love-making must be stopped!'" he broke out laughing so loudly at the recollection of Myrnie's vehement words, that his horse started and looked around at him. "The little chicken is jealous and wants me all to herself. Well, this is fate, this is fate. I have won her and she is mine."

A week later found Fred in Prescott. All was at last understood between him and his wife; they had had their talk and settlement. He flattered himself that she had borne it so well, and he was beginning to breathe the air of freedom, firmly believing that future circumstances would prove that he had acted for the best. "She will be so much happier without me as soon as she becomes ac-



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customed to the change," he told himself over and over again, in his eager effort to believe it.

Myrnie was in Prescott also, where she had gone to spend the summer, the place being so much cooler than Phoenix. She and Fred had resolved to see little of each other before the divorce was secured, but as may be readily imagined, they did not adhere strictly to this resolution.

One morning about a week after Fred had arrived in Prescott, the merry strain of whistled song that poured from his happy lips was abruptly checked as the door of his room was suddenly opened and a man stood in the doorway unannounced.

"Why—good morning, Dr. Morris," Fred broke out, striding toward him in surprise. The physician eagerly grasped the hand that was extended toward him.

"Good morning, Fred, good morning, good morning," he replied in his fatherly way. He looked steadily into the frank eyes turned to his, but failed to read what he sought.

"Glad to see you, Doctor," Fred said, thinking this was only one of the many visits the doctor paid Prescott, for he had as large a practice in this as he had in his home city. "How is every one in Phoenix?"

"Not so well, not so well, Harmon. Fact is I came to see you especially; came to see you on a serious and very urgent matter, I may say."

"Why, what is the matter?" he asked in a tone of alarm.

"Well, it is this. Mrs. Harmon has told me all." The visitor was standing with his feet apart, his hands in his pockets, looking grave, as becomes a doctor. "I

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am her physician and all that concerns her health, you see, concerns me."

A light was beginning to break upon the bewildered brain of Harmon. He grew pale and unnerved, expecting the worst. A picture of what was to come formed itself distinctly in his mind as though some kind of telepathy warned him.

"Phoenix is saying that you have deserted your wife for that pretty young school mistress, and it is killing her. She is a very sick woman. I fear she will die if you do not go back to her. The blow has taken from her all the strength of the past few months. I see now, I understand how it is that her life hangs on your hands. Her renewed interest in life came out of a renewed love for you. Love is wonderful, yes, a wonderful thing! What a shame, poor woman. I have studied her case, and I know her so well."

The doctor paced the room, in deep thought. Fred leaned against a chiffonier and listened as the doctor went on,

"The poor creature struggled bravely with herself. I came for you against her will, but she suffers terribly and is in worse health than I have ever seen her." Here the doctor's voice rose to a high pitch, and he was gesticulating wildly. "Harmon, if I could have laid hands on you yesterday when I stood by her bed and watched her suffer, I say, if I could have had you then, I should have killed you! And to think of the way she had been mending! This is the mistake of your life, Fred, and if you do not retrace your step you will regret it all your days. Your child, too, comprehends something of the situation, and the little fellow's grief

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is bitter to behold. I speak to you as man to man, as father to father. I am sure Mrs. Harmon will build up, once you manifest some interest in her. Come back with me this evening."

Fred stepped backward as though to catch himself from falling, as these words fell like a rain of blows on his conscience. He leaned heavily on the piece of furniture aghast and almost powerless. He saw it all so plainly, this awful situation,—his loss of Myrnie on the one hand, forever; on the other, as if by his own hand, the death of his wife, if he pursued the course he preferred. He stood, unmanned and weak, with a sense of dishonor; unmanned at the thought of his own and Myrnie's disappointment, dishonored by Amy's helplessness and his son's disrespect of him. But it was only for a minute that he remained thus.

He turned abruptly and faced the physician, towering above the thin stature of the man. There was no sign of weakness nor indecision about him now.

"Listen to me, Dr. Morris, I have behaved only as an honest man could behave. I have simply been true to myself first of all, true to my own soul, to my own manhood. Perhaps you think it does not require courage to be true to one's self first in all things. I am not ashamed of the fact that I told my wife the truth when she asked me for the truth. All love for her was dead. I told her that. Would it have been better to crucify all that is best in me, all the noble impulses that are inspired by a great love, lifting a man to his highest and best, or to speak a lie, live a lie, and all because of a mistake in early life? My wife never cared for me until that which she now calls love was kindled

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by jealousy. Do you call that love? Is love born of so petty an impulse? My wife wishes to hold that which was never hers. Who are you to come to me and dictate the course of honor and duty, you who have a wife and children, yet live the life of a—”

“Stop, Harmon; listen to me for a moment. You are thinking only of yourself. Now that all sounds awfully pretty—almost makes even me believe in honesty. But that is not a *man's* theory of life. Some over-moral woman has put that into your head. It may do for young people, but not for you. Your day is past. You are married, so just put it all out of your head. Love—bosh! My way is the best way. When we are married and are fathers, it does not do for us to desert our homes for some witch of a woman who comes along and snatches us off our feet. Besides, I do not love my wife the less because I can't resist pretty Anne,—you know whom I mean. The feeling I have for Anne I never had for Mrs. Morris, and, vice versa, so I am not robbing either of them. My love for my wife has not diminished, only grown a bit stale, you know, as all married love does and fails to inspire. I must have my wife and children, but I can have the pretty Anne, too, bless her.”

“Now you can come back to your wife, and you need not give up the little school mistress. (I have seen her and, by George! if I blame you.) Anne does not mind Mrs. Morris so long as I keep her purse filled. Those charming women are mostly like that. They are such clever devils. They think that the best of our love belongs to them, while our wives think that the best of our love belongs to them. Two different classes of

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women, you see, and they value different things. Theorize all you may, Harmon, but men are built like that. It has been so from the beginning of history, and that is pretty conclusive proof that it is human nature. Look at the birds, the peaceful beasts of the fields,—they are always young. Pshaw, Harmon, can't you see?"

Fred had listened closely to this speech, following it with his own train of thoughts. By the time the doctor had concluded, his mind was already firm and clear as to the only right course that was open to him, and he had the strength to follow it. God never puts upon us a heavier burden than we can bear. With a noble determination, and a lofty scorn of the doctor's complacent acceptance of what "men are built like" he turned to him and replied:

"I will go back to my wife and live an honest life with her to the end, I will devote my life to her care, will renounce that which is dearer to me than life itself. But I do not do so for love of her, though I do love my child. I have only a kindly sympathy for Amy, and I go back because her life hangs on my hands, as you say, but with no pretense of aught but human mercy. As for your plan of life, I can not follow your reasoning. I can not take the path you lay out for me. Any man who has ever known a really pure love could not demean his nature in that way. It destroys one's power to feel the sublimity of real love, one day of which is worth all the cheap sentimentality you could ever have felt. Go away, go! Leave me now. I will be at the depot to meet you this evening."

Dr. Morris left the room, not in the least disconcerted because another man's doctrine disagreed with his hypo-

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thesis of life. He was living his own theory; let every man do likewise. "To live and let live," was the doctor's belief.

Fred wrote a long letter to Myrnie. He could not trust himself to see her. He explained the situation and begged forgiveness for having forced his way into her life only to bring disgrace upon her. "You are young," he wrote, "forget me. I know you can. Since I know that I must, I wish I, too, could forget, but you know how impossible that is. I dare not ask of you any hope for the future, even should I ever be free, for you deserve to find a better life than I could give you. But oh, Myrnie, little Myrnie, think of the years before me, and have some pity."

As Fred and the physician rode back to Phoenix scarcely a word passed between them. Fred took a seat apart from his companion. As the train rumbled along, he sat with his head back in the cushion and thought, thought. His little wild-goose chase after happiness was at an end, still he had had some happiness, an eternity of it. Happiness so supreme that the memory of it would shine out like a bright light on his path forever. That memory would never desert him, no matter what should happen. "I have had my day of glory, all that God decrees wise to give one man in this world," he told himself, "I will now go back to Amy; she deserves hers. And there is little Wallace, too."

As all Arizona travellers know, the train from Prescott backs into Phoenix at the unholy hour of one-thirty A. M. Pleasant hour, if you do not care what you say. Did you ever come into Phoenix on that train in summer and after going to your hotel try to sleep on the

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mosquito-bar covered cot that stood on the balcony just outside your door? Stripped yourself threadbare and lay sweltering unable to close an eye till an hour before sunrise? Then the birds sang and tried to keep you awake, but it is the only hour cool enough for the birds to sing, and birds must sing. Did you ever come in on that train? I have, and the memory of it will remain with me to my grave. One has a peculiar feeling when he sleeps thus for the first time. He is conscious of all the other figures outstretched on their cots in a line down the balcony—men, women, children. Perhaps a woman is on each side of you only six feet away. They usually wear some thin garment. (Good thing it is dark, still morning comes.) I have seen a fair knee, a dainty foot, if not more, protruding from the sheet, as the unconscious victim snatches her little hour of slumber, regardless of the birds. A little later it is astounding to see ladies in kimonos with tousled heads, sneaking to their rooms, or gentlemen in pajamas on a keen trot.

This goes on all over Phoenix from porches, balconies, from elevated screen-rooms or from lawns. It is Phoenix's necessary custom. People must sleep. Because it is a necessary custom of that land, no harm ever comes of it. Every one is safe, even those dear sleeping beauties six feet from one.

When Fred arrived in Phoenix, he declined his friend's offer to accompany him to his home. He walked and carried his own grip.

When he entered his wife's room, he heard her stammered exclamation, "Thank God!" She had heard the

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train come in and had lain eagerly waiting, hardly daring to hope that he would come.

She smiled wanly as he walked up to her bed and demanded, "How are you, Amy?"

"Oh, you are so good, Fred, so good to have come. Sit down and let us talk it all over," she wailed.

"There is no need to talk it all over. I have come back to stay with you and care for you always. It is all right, Amy."

"Fred, do you love me, you do, don't you, Fred? I love you so."

"That is all right, Amy. Go to sleep and rest. I will sit here and watch you, I will stay with you always."

So, worn and weary from nights of sleepless weeping, she was soon slumbering peacefully and heavily. Fred took comfort in seeing her sleep so easily. He went to the child's bed and stood gazing down at him with set teeth and dry eyes, and in that moment his father's heart smote him.

He seated himself by a window and spent the rest of the night looking at the thin veil of moonlight in which the night was wrapped. His life seemed all a vague dream with a few sweet memories dotted here and there. But he knew that he would always have the memories to smile over. Let us not try to follow the sadness and the sweetness of his thoughts. His imagination carried him away into beautiful, beautiful places where she would be found waiting for him. But the sound of heavy breathing and the sight of two unconscious figures lying prone before him, bound him fast to his reality and pointed the finger of duty for him.



## CHAPTER XVII.

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MYRNIE answered Fred's letter. It was written while the first rage of insulted anger held her, and was rather relentless in an artful sarcasm. She did not pour out upon him resentment and scorn, upbraiding him for throwing her into the dust of groveling shame, but she told him that he had forced himself upon her from the first, that she could see it plainly now, and that on the whole she was glad that it had happened this way, and that his wife could not live without him because other people could easily. Said that his conduct has shown the unstability of his nature, but added that he had acted wisely, and assured him that she should have no difficulty in putting from her the memory of him. In her own secret thoughts, this man was raised much higher in her estimation for the part of honor he had been able to play. This feeling she could not get away from. Afterwards she wished she had not written him such a hasty letter, and spent a very miserable week or two over the affair. Myrnie had changed. Environment and experience were slowly but surely working out in her their inevitable law.

All this was Fred's to bear and he bore it somehow. He admired the girl that she could take it in this way, but her letter left its sting. His love for her had grown

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stronger if such were possible, and he forgave her everything and went on loving her.

He took Amy to California for the summer, and there in the cool breath that the great, peaceful ocean sends landward, he nursed her back to health. He gave her everything in him, his undivided thought and attention, all his time and strength, everything but his love; that was not his to give.

She grew quite strong again, and they all felt sure that permanent health was assured, but an attack of pneumonia overtook her very suddenly in the early part of July. She coughed and grew very weak, taking to her bed the first day. As before no nurse was employed. She preferred that her husband care for her, and this he did willing and tenderly. "Shall I arrange your pillows for you, Amy? Let me rub your limbs to take the chill away," or "Here, rest your head on my arm, I think it will enable you to breathe more easily." These were the kindnesses she constantly received from him, and she accepted them graciously, looking her gratitude in the smile she gave him. But a night came when all he could do for her relieved her not. The doctor came, did what he could, and went away.

"It is all over, Fred. I hear my call. I am ready to go. You have been a good husband to me, Fred, better than I deserved, but I did not know it till too late. Forgive me for that, Fred." She then sank into slumber and lay with half closed eyes, and a faint smile. Presently she started, sat up in bed and clasped her hands, "Oh, oh, oh!" she exclaimed, and her expression was one of pure delight. A fit of coughing took her, in which her words came in gasps.

"Don't—call—any one—Fred." He leaned near her,

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endeavoring to catch her words as she went on, "I want to die alone with you, Fred. Do not call any one. You will marry again, and I want you to do so, and she will be the pretty little teacher. She can give you what I never did, happiness and real love. I never forgot Tommy, Fred." Her voice grew steady, "You remember Tommy Mason. I was engaged to Tommy and I loved him. I shall find him with mother; he died, you know—died of a broken heart grieving of me. Why did you not let me marry Tommy? You did not care for me, nor did I care for you. We all could have been happy then. But oh, you were so masterful, Oh, you bad one!" Here she giggled like a girl at the memory. "But I love you at last after all these years. I know you now, Fred; we both understand. What trouble comes; and all from not understanding. There is no hate, no dislike in this world; there is just misunderstanding." Her voice grew calm and sane, rising and falling in even, musical cadences like one who was very happy. "No, everybody loves everybody, only they do not know it. Ah, if they only could know before this hour comes. There is no enmity, there is only a lack of understanding, only that."

The husband sat listening mournfully and silently to her words, realizing with distinct clearness the truth in them, puzzled again at this woman. He was beginning to think that he had misunderstood her in the past years. This was so unlike the woman he had thought her to be. "Bring Wallace," she gasped.

Fred hurried away, and when he came back carrying the half-wakened child in his arms, she was sitting up in bed smiling and looking perfectly well. Her cheeks were flushed and her eyes shone. She held out her

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arms for the child, who was beginning to cry, seeming to comprehend the situation.

She lay down again, the child held close to her in this last hour of her unnatural strength. Her lips were moving still, and Fred had to bend his ear very close to her mouth to hear her say, "Yes, and you will have a dear little baby girl. Will you call her Amy, and let her wear the little gold chain of mine with the tiny locket on her little baby neck? Oh, the dear little baby neck!"

Wallace was crying on his dying mother's breast, and Fred was crying too.

"Sh-sh-sh," and the woman raised a hand, "Do not cry. This is no time for tears. Pray. Listen to that music. Pray, pray," and she commenced repeating the Lord's Prayer. Father and son joined her in half whispers, but she closed her eyes at, "As we forgive our debtors," opened them wide and smiled, closed them again and sighed, and was gone. She looked like one quietly sleeping. Fred kissed her on the forehead.

The hush that fell as the father unlocked the child from the dead mother's firm grasp was broken by the child's wild sobbing. Fred held the little fellow to him and wept bitterly. Poor little, motherless boy, his father was weeping for his great loss.

The house was awakened, and the usual formal proceedings, such as every Christian burial demands, were administered. After a few days, the funeral over and all settled, Wallace was left with his grandmother, while urgent business called Fred back to Phoenix, where after a fortnight, he sent Myrnie full particulars of his wife's death, recalling such of her last words as he deemed befitting. But he received no reply to this, as he had faintly hoped that he might.

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News of the woman's death came to Myrnie while she was stopping at a little summer resort, at Mineral Springs, a few miles south of Prescott. This was a little cosmopolitan resort. People came from all over the Territory to enjoy the cool of the place and the mineral water, but they seldom stayed longer than a week or two. One made few acquaintances at this place that would endure beyond the season of the outing, and here Myrnie found a sweet asylum where she could live quietly after her disturbed existence of the past year. She did not want to know people, and she kept to herself almost entirely, becoming familiar only with the children of the place. For this she became noted in the vicinity, and was called eccentric as she played with the children in all their games. She soon became their ring-leader, and led them on long tramps over the hills in search of flowers, odd stones or deserted birds' nests. The cottage hotel at which she stopped stood a mile down the creek from the post office at the Springs, but she did not get her mail at this office, having made arrangements with a stage-driver, whose route led him to Turkey Creek, to have her mail dropped in a mail-box which stood by the road, a mile away over the rocky ridge of mountain, and for this also she was looked upon as peculiar. Men glanced searchingly at her, but she gave them a look that cut short any intention they may have had to become better acquainted with her.

She had so ordered her mail that she might enjoy the lonely stroll over the high wall of mountain, down into the somber little valley on the other side, through which she could see the stage road winding like a dusty strip of ribbon.

From the top of this ridge one commanded an expan-

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sive view of the surrounding country, and here Myrnie always halted for a little rest. Her eyes never grew weary of wandering over the earth's uneven, broken surface in its seemingly infinite stretch. The high, flat-topped mesas in the distance, the deep, black canons that lay between and the desert valleys with their few stunted trees.

Often she stood soliloquizing on the loneliness before her, in crude poetic lines composed extemporaneously. There was no one to hear, no one to mock the uncouth lines, and she was so full of intense feeling, which she had never been able to express; she was so full of poetry, passion, veneration and intensity, full to the running over, but she had never found a satisfying mode of expression, not even with her violin. Her vigorous nature was crying out to express itself, but she was too young to comprehend all this then. She only knew that she liked to talk aloud to herself when no one could hear.

Myrnie was not one of those girls who have a host of friends or correspondents. She lived too intensely to have a large number of people in her life at the same time, and it was only occasionally that she found a letter in the box even after the walk over the hill was made.

One evening in August she felt a strong call to visit the mail-box. This was one of those summons that we are pleased to name presentiments, and she answered it eagerly, never stopping on the hill top as usual, but descended the slope hurriedly, running down the smooth places, jumping from ledge to ledge where there were rocks. Life and youth were burning strong within her.

By the time she reached the mail-box and tip-toed up to unlock it, her strength was a little spent and she was trembling. To her surprise she drew out a thin

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envelope, the penmanship on which she recognized at once. Tearing it open hurriedly, she drew out a single sheet of paper which simply stated that the woman was dead, and that a registered letter was in Prescott containing newspaper clippings, along with a full account of the last moments.

After reading this Myrnie sank down upon the ground and remained for half an hour in deep thought.

"Can it be possible? can it really be?" she muttered. "At last, at last," and it seemed to her that there was rest in the knowledge of this death, though why, she could not say. Thus she sat looking about the brown hills, trying to realize the truth, and what it might mean.

"No, I will not. Freedom from him is too sweet. He binds me so." She wondered vaguely how Fred felt, but she thought in her secret thoughts that he must be glad. Then she wondered if death was the end of everything; she pondered many questions, but arose suddenly and tearing the letter into bits, scooped a hollow out of the soft earth with the toe of her shoe, dropped the torn bits of paper into it, covered them with her foot, rolled a large stone over the grave, pulled up a few dead, dry weeds, and sticking them in the ground around the rock, laughed mockingly.

The echo of her laugh rolled back prolonged from the hills, and repeated the jeering sound. This almost frightened her. It seemed that some devil was in the hills yelling at her, or maybe it was the ghost of the dead woman. Turning, she ascended the hill with long, rapid strides, growing serious as she gained elevation. On the summit she paused and looked backward; there lay the familiar, barren hills, so restful, so full of peace. She knew that they had been her friends, had given her

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their solid consolation and comfort at times when her heart had been heavy. She waved her hand to them and broke out, "Good-bye hills, good-bye valley, farewell mail-box, I shall see you no more. Good-bye, good-bye."

She walked rapidly home, but as long as she lives she will never forget the sensations and thoughts which came to her on that last walk to the lonely mail-box, nor the broader vision that opened to her as she sat on the bare ground looking around the somber little valley, nor the sound of her own laugh coming back to her from the hills. The next day she ordered her mail left at Prescott.

In the days that followed she could not analyze her feelings. She knew that there was great pity in her heart for some one, and after a time it came to her that this pity was for a little boy left motherless. Motherless! Ah, did she not know the meaning of that word? Still, there was something akin to pity for another, but try as she would, she could not place it. This bore heavily down upon her, and once in the night it came to her like a lost spirit in a mist, and she awoke in a fright to lie thinking of it, and shed some tears. Somewhere in her heart there was a hard, cold lump; it rose up bitterly and would not be dissolved. She could feel it there hurting like a cake of ice. A grim kind of satisfaction, joy even, that the woman was dead came with the pain.

"He will never desert me again to go at her call. He shall never have the opportunity to desert me again for anyone."



## CHAPTER XVIII.

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AFTER a month Fred came to Prescott. His first errand subsequent to getting settled in the hotel (of course, the Burk Hotel; it is the one place where gentlefolks stop in Prescott) was to locate Myrnie. He did not know what he hoped, what he feared. His all-absorbing wish was to find her; further than this he dared not let his desires stray at this stage. To find her, however, was not a difficult task.

Myrnie had come to town only a week before, in order to purchase necessities which every teacher finds indispensable with the opening of a new school year. Her duty called her within a few days.

The girl greeted Fred with cool, dignified surprise. She offered him a chair in her parlor, and they talked on general topics easily, but if he drifted into personal paths, she artfully led away from them. However, Fred Harmon had never been a man easily driven away from the things he chose for himself, and in due time the girl was pressed into giving him her plans.

Thus it was as it always had been with these two people; he had his way with her. He had a subtle way of laying his man's needs before her, knowing that her woman's heart, true to the mark, loved to give comfort to the male, loved to please him, to concede to him if her concessions were necessary to his happiness.

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"I am to teach far out in the country," she informed him. "It is forty miles from here, and fifteen miles from a railroad, and is one of the few spots left in the Territory that can truly be called Cattle Land; and that is why I wish to go there. It is a district rich in school funds, and pays a good salary, but most teachers refuse the place because it is so far out. I took this school in preference to several others which seemed more advantageous, because I am looking for some such experience. I want a complete change from what I have had."

"But, Myrnie, if you go away out there when can I ever see you. Would you let me come out there to see you?"

"Oh, you would not see me at all. I do not see what difference that could make."

"Myrnie, you know that kind of formal talk will never do with you and me. We know each other too well; we have been too close for formality to be a success."

"I mean what I say, Mr. Harmon; it has been firmly decided that all is over between us. You decided that when you left Prescott last summer."

"But listen, Myrnie, you can not blame me because—"

"I do not blame you at all. There is absolutely no necessity for discussing this question further." She stamped her foot and shook her head in a manner that was sure to make him all the more persistent.

"I wrote explaining how it all came about. Surely, Myrnie, you realize that I could not have done otherwise." He still pleaded.

"I read the letter and I realize it fully. What more can you ask? You would have been a brute to have deserted the woman."

"Then you will not allow me to explain anything."

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He was almost beside himself with disappointment and love of her. What woman could act like this?

"But I understand everything perfectly. There is nothing left for you to explain." He noticed the tense drawn look this conversation had brought to her face and he took it for indications of illness.

"You look almost ill, Myrnie. Are you sure that you are quite well?" he asked tenderly.

"Yes, I am well, thank you. The summer heat has been a bit trying to me. I shall be myself again in a short time, now that it is cool. A complete change will do me worlds of good."

"And you will not forgive me, not hear one word from me in patience? I know that I did right. Under the circumstances I could have done nothing else. Could I have let the woman die, knowing that my act had dealt the blow? Could I have had the woman's life on my hands? Then you might well have loathed me. I went back and performed my humane duty and gave up all that was dear to me. Now I have nothing with which to reproach myself. You wished me to gain my freedom for your sake and I have won it honorably. Can you hate me for that? Ah, how hard it was when I loved you all the time, just you, Myrnie, all the time."

"No, it was like this," she said. "You cared for me only in a light way, only when the ripples on the stream of life were quiet and undisturbed. You soon found whom you really loved when the test came. I do not despise you for this. It is all very natural. She was the wife of your choice, the mother of your child; you had lived with her for many years, and the love of her had worked deeply into your heart, and was there to spring up and speak for its life when the time came.

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That is the true analysis of the situation." There was a ring of bitterness in the words "child" and "choice," and Fred did not fail to notice it.

"Now," she continued, "when there is no one at hand for whom you care more, you come back to me and ask me to forget the insults you have heaped upon me. I shall not do it, Mr. Harmon—shall not. Do not prate to me of humane duty. You were just selfish in the matter, just selfish. I have come to know that what I thought was love for you was only a reflection of your feeling toward me. It was not a great love, was not love at first sight as all true love must be." (The poor little romantic girl was laboring under this worn-out delusion.) I thought I cared because I knew you cared."

Fred had been pacing the room during her rapid, excited speech. Now he sat himself down wearily. This was the way she interpreted all his sacrifice and his suffering — "just selfish." He felt that he had lost a hard-fought battle. After a few minutes he said in a low voice,

"Marriage is not necessarily the end of love, as inexperienced people think. It is just as easy and natural to fall in love after marriage as it was before, if the person you married fails to keep your love. However, an honest man must always perform his duty. I can see that more plainly now than ever, and I would do it the same again." (He arose to go.) "If that is the way you understand it, I will say no more." Walking to the door, he turned and spoke again, "I can not blame you. You are so young yet, so inexperienced. You look at life through untried eyes, but good bye, Myrnie," extending his hand.

"Good bye, Mr. Harmon," she said sweetly. Then

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they shook hands cordially, and he walked away, wondering what interest in life could keep him alive, where could he go, what could he do. The girl stood watching him as he walked away from her, pondering the same questions for herself.

Little did she dream, as his form had vanished from view, and she stood looking over the pretty town, that to-morrow the attractive picture would appear strangely altered. It is the trivial happenings and commonest occasions that oftentimes work the greatest changes in our surroundings.

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A Swede who worked long hours in a mine milked his cow after dark. He kept some matches and a lantern in the stable for the purpose of making a light. Mice usually inhabit barns and mice like chewing the phosphorus from the ends of matches. Perhaps some of the mice are high-toned and this takes the place of rum omelet to them. Strange that the Swede had not known better than to leave the matches lying loose, but he was an "Ole Oleson" like very many of his countrymen, and he "Tank she bane safe enough." But the matches were carried to the nests of the mice in the hay, and when the matches were chewed and set burning, the hay was ignited. The Swede discovered the flame while he was milking his cow. He dashed his pail of milk on the fire but failed to extinguish it. He then ran to his horses and cows and cut their ropes, sending them helter-skelter into the streets, but before he could rush out and give the alarm, the whole barn was in a blaze.

The fire alarm was sounded, and after a while the hose cart, ladders and engine came lumbering up the

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hill. A strong wind was blowing, spreading the flames in many directions. Already many of the surrounding structures had caught fire, the Swede's house being one of the first to go.

Gallantly and nobly did the firemen work, every effort being exerted to check the onrush of the flames, but that night Fate seemed enlisted against Prescott. It was a town of five thousand inhabitants, closely built, and the majority of the buildings were inferior, wooden structures, dried like tinder through the long summer drought. No rain had fallen in six months. Very little water remained in the reservoir. The people knew this, and were frantic. Fire could not have visited their city at a more unfortunate day. The water was used very wisely, but its force was soon spent; the town was too dry, the gale too angry.

The Swede's barn stood at the upper end of a street, which was connected by a long line of frame buildings with Whiskey Row, from whence an ambling line of old shacks reached a half mile to the Burk Hotel. In an incredibly short space of time, the advance guard of the lapping red tongues were hurrying along toward Whiskey Row. If the course of the flames could not be stayed before the large stores of alcoholic liquors were reached, all effort must be vain.

Buildings were being pulled down, and some were dynamited in the eager effort to subdue the scarlet enemy, but the spiteful wind carried great flaming sheets over the spaces thus made; these galloped madly on, and soon explosions were heard in the direction of Whiskey Row, and the people knew in their troubled hearts that these were the explosions of the stores of spirits.

The fire had not travelled in one direction only. It

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was also spreading along Cortez Street, taking the buildings on both sides. The great fight was now to keep it from reaching the storehouse of Bashford-Burmister, for in this receptacle were large quantities of mining supplies, powder, dynamite and giant caps; this, too, looked like a hopeless battle. All the able-bodied men and boys were fighting like Trojans, and many women did what they could in their weak way, to check the onrush of the conflagration; but what was the use? No help could be expected from any of the sister towns. Those of any size were too far distant, and the fire departments of even the best of them were primitive in nature and insufficient for the city's needs, like those of Prescott.

By midnight the whole business section of the town was in flames. A terrible glare lit up the heavens, and the heat was almost unbearable. Many noble workers fell down, overcome at their posts, and had to be taken away to places of safety.

Women cried, cursed and fainted, and some few prayed: these prayers were as unavailing as were the curses, for the fire demon is no respecter of sentiment.

At last the flames reached the powder stores. The populace fled with white faces, daring neither to entertain hope nor fear. The explosion came, a great deafening roar, filling all space with its terrible sound. Then followed a terrific concussion, which, however, did not do the damage expected, for, strange to say, the blast "pot-holed," that is, sent its force upward. Fortunately enough there was only a small quantity of blasting supplies in the town, the main magazine being two miles from the city, half buried under a mountain of granite. Nevertheless, the shock was so severe that many adobe

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and brick structures were damaged or laid flat, while people were thrown to the ground.

Only a few dwelling houses were destroyed by the fire. One of the best of these was the residence of Judge Crew. The Judge and his wife were in the habit of frequently attending bridge parties. At such times they left their two babes locked in the house with a trusty Chinese cook, who sometimes slumbered too soundly over his pipes, and this unfortunate evening was one that the jovial Judge and his wife had chosen to spend at the home of a friend a mile up Granite Creek.

At the first shrill scream of the fire alarm, the Judge and his wife ran from the house in great excitement, the woman screaming and falling over countless objects till she fainted. The Judge, being a strong man, picked his wife up and threw her over his shoulder, her poor head hanging down pitifully. This precious burden impeded his progress perceptibly. When the terrified spouse came to consciousness, the Judge was compelled to linger some little time with her before she was able to follow, and when they rushed down Cortez street, the blockade in the highway compelled them to take a roundabout course, and by the time they reached their house it was all in flames and unsafe to enter. The Judge desperately attempted to force an entrance and save his children, but he found the hall completely filled with fire, and fell down strangled and unconscious. He would have perished, but that strong hands came to his aid in the nick of time.

Meanwhile the crazed mother stood screaming to the firemen to save her perishing children. They made several gallant attempts, but were each time forced back. Some of them stood holding the crazed mother, lest she



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rush into the arms of a useless death. She cried aloud and beat her breast, calling upon God to save her babes.

A tall man stepped from the crowd, and inquired of the woman in what part of the house her children were. She pointed to a window on the second floor, "In that room, sir. Oh, please save my children for me! In there! You will not all stand by and let them burn! You can see a post of the bed in which they lay through the open window." Then she burst into screams of agony.

The tall man cast about for a ladder, but none could be had. They were all in use in other parts of the town. "Give me a rope!" he shouted. A rope was fetched him, but how was he to fasten it on the bedpost?

Myrnie Leston was among the excited throng that crowded about the house. She had rushed with strangers from quarter to quarter till she was almost exhausted. She saw the act of the tall man, and was inspired to go and encourage him, but she could not get through the crowd. The man had made three unsuccessful attempts to throw the rope through the open window over the bedpost, when a slender, dark youth emerged from the people and quietly said, "Give me your rope, Mister."

The rope was put into his hands. He backed off a few paces, commanded the crowd to make room, took the noose in his right hand, making no useless swings of the rope about his head, but giving it a slanting upward toss. All eyes saw it go circling up and over the bedpost. A slight jerk to tighten the rope, and it was handed back to the tall man.

Myrnie stood very near to the youth, and she was so greatly overcome by the mastery of his act and the cheers that greeted it that she put out a hand voluntarily

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and touched him. He looked at her and smiled frankly into her eyes. His easy, undisturbed smile and his eyes were compelling. Then folding his arms over his chest, he stepped back into the dissembling crowd.

There was too much transpiring in front of the girl for her to follow the form of the courageous young man. She turned quickly as a sound of smothered exclamations came to her ears. She saw the tall man scaling the wall by means of the rope, then followed a half minute of breathless silence, as he paused on the window sill a moment to get breath, and as the red, yellow glare flashed up and threw its halo on his face, the girl recognized him. It was Fred.

Myrnie knew why his heart could be so tender to-night; she knew why his life meant little to him, and why he could so easily imperil it to assuage the woes of a desolate mother. She staggered blindly as she saw him dash into the smoke-filled room, but the next minute he was back again poising on the sill for the descent, but with two limp bundles under his arm. He put them together under one arm, and using the free hand commenced to slide backward down the rope. When he had almost reached the ground, the whole side of the house, having been undermined by the fire within the lower room, fell in and came with a crash to the ground. By a seeming miracle the man and the two babes were snatched from the burning debris, and the flames smothered from their clothes.

Strange as it may appear, the babes were safe, and had sustained few injuries. They were placed in the arms of their parents, who were frantic with joy, to the extent that they omitted the formality of expressing

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their gratitude to the brave rescuer till several days had passed.

Neither was Fred hurt. As soon as he was released by those who had taken him from the ruins, he turned to see who it was who was hugging his arm. A pale, frightened girl stood clinging to him, crying noiselessly.

"Myrnie," he exclaimed and they were in each others arms. "Let us get away," she muttered.

"First, let us find the fellow who threw that rope for me. That was the best piece of roping I ever saw." They looked about, but the young man was nowhere to be found.

"Who could he have been, anyway?" Fred asked to himself. Then he answered his own question, "Guess he was some cowboy who happened to be in town. Sorry I can't find him, I would like to shake hands with that fellow."

Myrnie and Fred drew away from the assemblage of huddled forms, and sought a place on higher ground which had not been visited by the flames, and was beyond all danger of the same. They seated themselves on a piece of wooden sidewalk and beheld the devastating work of the fire monster.

Loud crashes of falling buildings and explosions came to their ears incessantly. Dawn was breaking faintly over the startled hills, and an unnatural stillness held everything outside the city. The business part of the town was completely destroyed, and a few of the residences.

"The Burk hotel is almost gone," Fred remarked.

"Yes," an Irishman put in, who overheard the remark as he passed them, "And think of the millions of precious little lives that have been lost!" (meaning the

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bed-bugs.) The Irishman passed on up the hill, the huddled pair on the sidewalk followed him for a moment with their eyes and smiles, for both of them well knew the truth of his remark.

By noon of that day the flames were completely subdued, and the town lay a heap of smoldering ruins. Granite Street, as well as the "million of precious little lives," had been completely wiped out, and its shiftless inhabitants set adrift upon the town. There had been but one case of loss of life in the whole place, though hundreds of narrow escapes were accounted and a number were reported injured. The one unfortunate was the poor, drowsy Oriental in Judge Crew's house.

Every resident in the Territory of Arizona remembers that terrible night in Prescott, and scarcely one but held his grain of human interest in the town—if in no stronger sense, a deep sympathy for some friend who suffered loss. The residents of Prescott speak of the night with dread and pained faces. Many in the dead of night still dream of the horror of the angry red glare that filled the whole dome of the sky, as though the Judgment Day had come.

Heavy-hearted, but with ever increasing zest, they set to work bravely rebuilding their town, for the Western spirit knows no defeat. Their courage and animation grew as they saw the modern, new structures climb into the sky. To-day the town is magnificent, and stands a monument to courageous hearts that thus brooked their loss. Every one admits that the fire was a God-send to Prescott, for now she is the favored city of the Territory. But let the fire alarm sound its shrill scream to-day, and the people are wild and frantic. They have not forgotten.

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Out of the thousands who were downcast and injured after the calamity, there were two who deemed themselves benefitted and supremely happy: Myrnie and Fred, of course. All was made up between them, and it was settled that Fred should go East to float his mining enterprises, and Myrnie should teach the Brown Springs school, but that one year from the date of the fire their lots were to be cast together.

Fred Harmon's troubles seemed at an end. He could look before him, up the long avenues of the future, and see the lines of perspective drawing to a common point of joy in the distant center of his vision. All memory of the dead wife and her sorrow was wiped out in the great selfishness of this love, which wholly absorbed and made another man of him.

Myrnie had been awakened to a sense of love. It had come to her heart when she stood among the people about Judge Crew's burning house; had been flashed to her from a pair of eyes which spoke from a kindred soul. There in the heat and glare and danger, amid scenes which reached down to the bottom of one's soul, and pulled the emotions up as it were by the roots, had come to her undeveloped heart love, at this hour when she had least expected it. Yes, love; that for which she had longed, about which she had speculated so much. It had come at last, had burst upon her as a rose bursts into bloom in a single ray of the sun's heat. It was in her entire being; she could feel it uplifting her and making her a wonder unto herself; and yet there was something so elusive and indistinct about it. It seemed to vanish at times, and she was hardly able to place it upon any tangible object. As she looked at Fred in the days that followed, it hardly seemed to her that he was the

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object of this love. When she sat in the moonlight with him or in any dimly lighted place, she told herself that it was Fred, and that love possessed this uncertain elfish nature. With her renewed promise to him there came too the feeling of being bound, that she had always experienced before, and this was unpleasant to her free-born soul. Several times she was on the point of asking him to let her go; but her sympathy arose again, at the pain he would suffer, and this kept her from making a request for her liberty.

## Part II.

# Life Among the Hammerheads.

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### CHAPTER I.

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MYRNIE had written the clerk of the Browns Springs school that as school was to open on the following Monday, she should appear among them on Saturday, and suggested that he have a team at Myer (which was the terminus of the railroad from Prescott) to meet her and transfer herself and baggage to her destination.

This particular Saturday was a busy day among the ranchers at the Springs. Every man was hustling, and could not spare either his services or his team. But difficulties of this kind were usually easily overcome among the ranchers. Any of the cowboys in the community would consider it an honor to be commissioned to go after the new school teacher, but it now being a rushing time with the cattle, they too were needed at home.

Frederic Oliver, Jim Bailey's sheep herder, better known in the neighborhood as Grin, most forcibly offered his services, and having eliminated a difficulty by hiring Moor's boys to tend his flocks during his absence,

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was told to ride the filly over to Myer, and to get a team at Joe Myer's stable with which to bring home the new teacher.

Grin was delighted, honored, uplifted. He rode to the village at full gallop, using the filly disgracefully. How could he afford to consider the filly? He would be the first to meet the new school mistress!

"Haven't a team left in the stable," Joe Myer, big man of the town, landlord, postmaster and what not, told Grin when he laid his wants before him. "But if you will go up to Gray's, I think Don will be glad to let you have his swift trotters and his red-wheeled black top. Don always has been pretty tolerable partial to schoolmarms; besides I reckon the best in the land is none too good for the tribe." Thus joked good-natured Joe, much beloved by miner, sheep herder and everybody else.

Grin, almost exasperated, set out on a dead run to the five-acre farm where the Grays' lived. The train bringing the young lady was bearing down upon them; he could see its smoke up at Poland Junction. He breathed relief when he found the Gray brothers, Don and Roy, in the barnyard with the team of trotters almost hitched to the red-wheeled buggy. When Grin laid his predicament before them, they laughed loudly, considering it a great joke, abandoned the ride they had planned, and told Grin to run back to the depot so as to be there to meet the stranger when she arrived, and that as soon as they could finish hitching up the horses, one of them would follow with the team.

Grin dashed back to town, hot foot, and rushed upon the platform as Myrnie stepped from the car, looking



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about her uneasily, feeling most conspicuous as the bold-eyed loungers stared at her. Grin ran up to her, his freckled face red to the neck, and the heated redness of his scalp shining through his thin white hair and blowing his excited breath into her face, as he shouted:

"You're the new teacher for Browns Springs, Miss Leston, ain't you?"

"Yes, sir," said Myrnie, holding in with difficulty a burst of merriment.

"Well, I'm Frederick Oliver, and right yonder comes Don Gray with his crack trotters and black top, the finest rig in these parts, and I'm to take you over to the Springs, to Miss Moor's or to Miss Morgan's, whichever place you want to go."

Don Gray had driven up and was hitching the team, having heard every word of Grin's awkward introduction, which, with the short, thick set of the fellow, and his crude attempt at smart dress, was ludicrous in the extreme. As the two came toward the buggy, Don's head was bent forward. The brim of his felt sombrero hid all of his face except the chin, but Myrnie could see that he was laughing to himself as he handed the lines over to Grin. He glanced up in time to catch the mischievous twinkle in the eyes of the girl, and the two of them gave way; the spirit of mischief controlled them, and they could not withhold their laughter.

Grin looked from one to the other of them, dumb-founded and all unconscious of the cause of their strange behavior; but he lost no time in throwing the baggage behind the seat, and when he had helped Myrnie into her seat, he sprang up beside her, and broke into a vol-

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ley of bellows, ended by a whoop and a yell—though for what reason he did not know. Grin decided that if Don Gray was going to start in like that and be such a dandy fellow with the girls, he would do likewise and a little better. He struck the horses several smart cuts and drove away, while the girl beside him, still convulsed, looked back over her shoulder at the handsome dark fellow who was hanging to the edge of the platform to support himself as he swayed about in a tumult of sport, unable to control himself.

Neither of those in the buggy spoke as the trotters spun over the first mile of the road, but soon Grin brought his horses to a walk and addressed her, "Did you ever meet Don Gray before?"

"Oh, no; I have never met any one from out here," she told him.

"Lord, a body would think you and he were old chums," he said. He sat fumbling with the lines, pondering the fact that they had not met before; then he said to himself, "I wonder what they were laughing at? Search me! Schoolma'ms are sure queer."

When they had climbed to the top of the long ridge which separated the two valleys, they could see the country over which they were to pass as well as the hills, black rocky *mesas* and devious canyons that lay far beyond. Some fourteen miles ahead of them, standing somewhat higher than the surrounding elevations, stood Eshler's Peak, like a lofty brick tower against the faint purplish hue of the hills beyond. Iron Mountain and Browns Hill were nearer, and not so red in their iron formation. Aside from these peaks, the wide expanse of desert valley was comparatively level, stretching

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away thirsty and tongue-parched to the barren ranges of mountains which hemmed it in on all sides. The road easily could be traced over the varicolored, rolling plain. Now you saw it creeping over a level space covered with dead dry grass; it lost itself in a ravine to come into view again bending over a ridge of higher dark colored ground; it lay over spaces of white lime outcroppings, then further on, like a red ribbon, curved around the base of Browns Hill and out of sight. Everywhere the country was parched, and sear, and lonely looking, but Myrnie had learned to appreciate these Western landscape pictures and was pleased with the scene before her, though it brought a great sense of isolation.

"Stop for a minute!" (she altered her commanding tone) "will you, please?" And her companion obeyed.

"Must we follow that long, lonely road?" she asked.

"That's the road, Miss. The Browns Springs neighborhood and your school is over there, between Browns Hill and Eshler's Peak. Dry Creek runs through there, and the Ague Frio cuts through that canon this side of Eshler's Peak. That's no dry country. It may look dry to you, but it does not to an old cow. That's all fine stock range, saccaton, gramma grass, filaree, and other fine varieties, ripe now and full of rich seed. All the range cattle are fat now and the sheep too. This is the kind of a year that makes a feller feel glad he is a stock man. That's only thirteen miles from here, fifteen miles from Joe's, we call it. You've no notion of turning back have you?"

"No, no, but it makes me feel so lonely," she told him.

"Pshaw, that will not last long; you'll like it. Mighty

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good people live over here, just as sociable and clever. They're lookin' for'ard mighty keen to your comin', powerful anxious to know what sort of a lookin' girl you are. Gee Whiz, the surprise that's waitin' for 'm!"

"Why, Mr. Oliver, am I so bad looking as that?" she asked.

"Bad lookin'? Gee Whiz, it's your all-fired good looks that is goin' to surprise 'm. None of the other teachers was ever so purty."

"Oh, you are trying to flatter me, Mr. Oliver," she was laughing.

"Lord God, girl, ain't you got no lookin' glass at your house?"

"Where are you going to take me to board?" she asked, ignoring his last question.

"I ain't goin' to take you no place against your will. That is for you to settle. Ther's two places where they want you to board; at Becky Moore's and at Lucy Morgan's. Miss Morgan is the cleanest housekeeper. Gee Whiz, her house is just like wax, but then I have observed that a cranky woman is usually a good housekeeper; but Lucy don't set the good table that Becky does. Lucy, she's too stingy, yes too stingy to set the meal's victuals that Becky does. Nor Lucy hain't got the purty room all a'waitin' for you that Becky's got, for I was down to Becky's yesterday and Grace showed the room to me. Of course, Becky, she's got four kids and can't be expected to keep her house done up so spink-spank as Lucy can without no young ones. I think you would feel more to home with Becky; she's different from Lucy. Lucy is a good woman, and I would not for the world say one word to cause you to

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go to Becky's instead of Lucy's. But, Gee Whiz, Lucy is Irish, she's got the red hair. Let a woman show me the red hair and I will show you the spit-fire. Then Lucy, she's got the pug-nose; let a woman show me the pug-nose and I will show you the inquisitive meddler, a snupe, who goes into your trunk and reads your letters when you are not at home. That's what Lucy did to one teacher who boarded with her. Then she went about the neighborhood after the teacher had gone and told some all-fired lies about the letters. Then Lucy, she has all those cowboys from the O. R. ranch hanging around her place most of the time, Silvertip, The Corkonian and The Terror of Dublin, we call'm, besides a hunchback we call the Three-cornered Kid, all Irish, of course. They are always welcome at Lucy's house, and they make a regular boar's nest of her place. Becky is a fine motherly woman. I go to Becky's often, she is just like a mother to me."

"I think you can take me to Mrs. Moore's. I like children and they will keep me from being lonesome. Besides I rather need a mother myself."

"You've chosen wise, Miss. I think a whole lot of you already. Soon as I set eyes on you I said to myself, 'Now, there's a girl!' You can't fool me on women, I've studied 'm. Now, Lucy, she'll be as mad as a hornet because you go to Becky's, and she'll blame me for it, and there is no more love between me and Lucy now than the law allows. But you can tell her that I had nothing whatever to do with it. You like child company and I admire you for it. Lucy can't blame me because she is not so prolific as Becky." Grin here enjoyed a quiet laugh to himself and continued, "You see,

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Bob Moore and Eshler Morgan are half-brothers; both are cattlemen and naturally their wives don't jibe. I herd sheep for Jim Bailey; cattlemen and sheep never jibe. I never do bother Bob with the sheep, but sometimes I let'm stray down close to Lucy just for a little sport." Here he threw back his head and let out a long, loud roar, which reminded the girl of deer hounds she had heard in Nova Scotia. But Grin went on,

"Last summer Lucy brought her gun out and shot a sheep or two for me right before my eyes, and I tell you I hustled them away. Yes, Lucy and I, we love each other when we are dreaming. But you will like the school over here and most of the people. We sure do have the big times over here in winter, dances all over the country. A bunch of us fellers gets a girl apiece and goes sixteen or twenty miles to a dance, go to Cherry Creek, or McCabe, or to Camp Verde. But our own dances right here at home in Eshler's hall suit me well enough. Do you dance, Miss?"

"Yes, I am learning. I have been in this country only a year, and I never danced in Nova Scotia. I am rather an inexperienced dancer."

"But you've sure come to the right place to get broke in. Yes siree, this am sure the place where they break broncos."

"Do the young people of Myer come over to your dances?" Myrnie inquired, hedging toward a question that interested her.

"Yes, some of them," and after a minute's thought he added, "But if it's Don Gray you're wantin' to know about, I can tell you that feller is struck on himself. He goes to Prescott to the swell dances; takes his girl, Kate

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with him. How could you expect a swell guy like him to mingle much with us hammerheads over here? We don't put on agony enough for him."

"Then he has a sweetheart?"

"Don Gray? Well, I guess, yes! He's a full-blooded ladies' man. But I'm not afraid of his gettin' struck on you. He can see no one but Kate just now. She's old Bremister's daughter down country on the Ague Frio. He's a cattleman and considerable rich. Kate is sure purty—big black, snappin' eyes—but Gee Whiz, black eyes don't go when you are around."

Here the girl laughed outright, and asked him if he did not think Don Gray might think the same.

"No danger of that; Don Gray is plumb salmioned on Kate; she's got her clutches on him. He comes over to my camp and stays a week at a time. Don and I are good friends, but he does not care that much for me alone. My camp is only two miles from Bremister's ranch. Don is gone all day some days, and some days he stays at camp, and some days he herds for me if I want to go to the burg, and on these days Kate is out on the hills herding with him. But I savvy why Don visits me so often. He never mentions her name, unless I jeer him about her."

Myrnie did not reply to this. She became absorbed in the scenery, turning about and looking over the country they had left behind. On every side were mountains, great granite mountains, hemming in the expansive valley, reaching far to the north and to the south, much greater in length than in breadth. The low land was thickly studded with sage brush, grease wood and mesquite, with here and there a live oak tree. On

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the mountain sides were scattered scrub-oak and on the rocky ledges scrub-cedar.

"That ridge we crossed back there is Pine Ridge," Grin informed her, "because that pine tree that you see on the summit, is the only pine tree in this section. This first mountain ahead is Iron Mountain. I. T. Stewart has a copper mine up on the summit of the lime and iron there. The mine is closed now for lack of funds. Doc Manhart is the keeper, Doc is the darnation good feller. We are only five miles from Becky's now."

They rode on in silence for a mile or two; then Grin raised his whip and pointed toward a bluff of rock, which seemed to push its tall granite spires from the end of a long ridge. These spires stood up in broken, uneven lengths, casting their long shadows behind them, for the evening was far advanced.

"That's Black Hawk's Stronghold. Under those rocks are caves filled with rattlesnakes. Thirty years ago old Black Hawk, the Comanche chief, and his braves, held off Uncle Sammie's boys for a whole winter in those caves."

Myrnie wished to inquire further about Kate. All this news about Indians did not interest her much. However, she feared to manifest a deep interest in the girl, since her companion had already shown suspicion of this interest.

"Well, here we are at Becky's," Grin remarked as they turned the summit of a round knoll, and came in view of an old-fashioned lumber-house. As they approached the gate, a little girl in blue gingham pinafore ran to open it and stood smiling to greet them.



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"Hello, Milly," Grin called out. "This is your new teacher."

"Good evening, Milly," Myrnie said, wishing to become friendly with her new surroundings at once.

"Hello," grinned back the dear little girl, hanging on behind the buggy, and inspecting the baggage curiously.

They went through the gate, passed some barns and drove on to the house within the picket paling, to greet the family who stood in the yard, Becky Moore with her hands on her hips; Bob, her husband, with arms folded over his chest; Grace, a healthy girl of sixteen, whose tanned arms came out of the sleeves of a pink dress, and two boys, Rob and Elmer, respectively twelve and fourteen, standing somewhat apart, bashful but more curious perhaps than all the rest. An uncouth and awkward group they seemed to Myrnie, but the hearty welcome and their honest pleasure in meeting her were unmistakable.

The girl greeted them warmly, shaking hands with all of them, even with Rob and Elmer, who offered their "paws" lamely, being unused to so much ceremony.

"Come right in, Miss Leston; I know you are plumb tired out with that ride. I'll show you right to your room. Law, I was only a girl and right from a thick-settled part of Iowa when I first came over that road. I sure thought that Bob was bringing me to the edge of the jumping-off place."

"Oh, I think it is charming out here, Mrs. Moore," was the cheerful reply from the girl.

"Law child, I'm glad if you do. I've grown used to it now and should not care to live any place else. The

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ride to Myer is a pleasure trip to me now. I think you will find us fair folks to live with, if a bit plain."

Mrs. Moore had led to a large room on the ground floor which opened onto the veranda as well as into the large living room. There was plenty of light and cheer in the room and comfortable furniture, which Myrnie mentally inventoried as follows: An old-fashioned bed curtained in white, pillow shams starched stiff and with mottoes in the centers (encircled by garlands of flowers which read, "Go to sleep like the flowers," and "A glorious morning unto you"), three chairs of different styles, two rockers and a straight back, a table with a red cover, a heavy old chest of drawers newly varnished, a red plush-covered spring couch (which when you sat down threw up your knees to hit you in the face, so weak the springs had become), a washstand, with blue granite-ware bowl and pitcher, and a large rug which almost covered the floor. Freshly ironed muslin curtains were at the windows, colored cards, old fashioned bric-a-brac and an old chromo or two lit up the dim wall-paper. This was the "purty room" Grin had held out as an inducement for her to come to Becky's. Later, when Myrnie had been through the house, she discovered that every article of beauty the household possessed had been lovingly transferred to this room.

Her baggage had been brought in and placed by loving hands. It did not take Myrnie long to find that the one, all-absorbing, annual interest was the new school teacher, she being about the only new person worth while who came to dwell among these people.

The girl adjusted her belongings in her room and felt almost happy. Presently the pretty, sunburned face of

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little Milly was thrust in at the door to announce that supper was ready. Grin Oliver had remained for the meal, of course. Every face was cheerful and bright, Becky Moore doing the bulk of the talking, while her sleepy husband acquiesced and agreed with her in every instance. The children looked at Myrnie constantly or spoke in awed whispers; however, the contents of the table provided more than one item of interest to the hungry stranger. There was tenderloin steak, roast quail, sweet home-made butter, thick cream for everything, rich cold milk to drink, cottage cheese, fresh eggs, pie and cake, and all spread out in generous family style.

"Now, we haven't much to eat, but pitch right in and help yourself and make yourself at home. I do hope you will not starve out here among us hammerheads."

"Why, Mrs. Moore, the table is fairly groaning under this load; rarely have I seen such a generous board," was the girl's reply, and this set the children all laughing at the idea of the table's groaning. Milly hid her head under the table and whispered to Rob, "Generous board! My, but she is stylish!"

Myrnie neither heard nor saw this. Mrs. Moore was telling her about the school, that this year there would be a good, large attendance, about fifteen pupils in all, while last year there had been but ten. That last year they had paid seventy-five dollars per month, but had more money this year, and could pay ninety dollars, since more money should be paid for teaching more children, and if all this year's school money was not used that it went back to the common school fund, anyway.

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After the meal Myrnie and the two girls went out to look about the place. A wide veranda ran around three sides of the house. Ill-kept flower-beds were scattered about the yard, with dying bachelor buttons, phlox and marigolds in them. A thin hedge of sweet peas stood up along the fence, while hop vines and morning glory vines sheltered the western porch. A few fruit trees stood in the inclosure called the yard; in the back part stood old outbuildings without doors, littered with tools, farming implements (though I do not know what use there was for these), saddles, bridles, horseshoes, and reeking of cowhides and sheepskins.

Dry Creek, dry, except for a few deep holes of water along its course, delved into a deep hollow along the south side of the fence, the banks of which broke off sheer and slippery just outside the inclosure, where pools of slimy green water stood in the deep hollows. Herds of range cattle came here to water, and the banks were deeply tracked and cut up.

Myrnie could hear the wild doves cooing to each other all along this creek, and the sense of rest and peace which the sound conveyed to her overwrought nerves was welcome indeed. There was another sound which was not so consoling, and this Myrnie took for the bleating of a sheep in distress. "Baaa! baaa!" was called out at frequent intervals, till the girl began to feel that it needed help.

"I wonder what is the matter with that poor sheep," she remarked.

"What sheep?" Grace asked her.

"Did you not hear that sheep bleating as though it were in distress? Listen, and you will hear it." They

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stood still and listened, but the sheep kept still. Just as they were giving up the idea of hearing it again and had started toward the barns, "Baa! baa!" said the sheep.

"There," said Myrnie, "you heard it that time." To her surprise the two girls threw up their hands and screamed with laughter, and it was some time before they could say, "That is no sheep—that is a frog in one of those pools." And they ran to the house to tell the others about the "teacher's poor sheep," and the laughter was as hearty here also. Of a verity that is the way the frogs croak in Arizona.

The girls now went to the barns, where the great corrals were. The fences were made high and strong to hold the milling herds of cattle. A number of these strong corrals stood together, opening one into another by a series of bars. These Myrnie was told were used for cutting out or separating horses or cattle, being considered better than the old way of using the open plain. Upon a hillside stood the sheep-pens, made of brush and the dipping bins, the sheep of a large territory being brought here for the spring dipping. This ranch seemed to be the center of operations of the whole country. Myrnie was amazed at the stock of information these two girls were able to give relative to the handling, raising and shipping of all kinds of live stock, especially cattle, but on many subjects upon which girls of their ages should have been informed, they were totally ignorant.

"Oh, it's heaps and heaps of fun to see them cut out," Grace informed her. "All the cowboys in the country come here because Pa has the best arrangements of anyone about here, and he lets all use them, and it's fine to

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see the sheep dipping, too. I've stayed on the top of this fence all day long watching them cut out steers to ship. Some of the old forty-niners are sure sinners."

"Forty-niners? What are they?" Myrnie asked.

"Those are the old, long-horned boys who have escaped the round-up for a year or two. They get lean and raw-boned and wild, and are sure in for a scrap. You bet the boys have to fight shy of them, or they get a gutted horse," Grace replied, unconscious of the slang she used.

The remainder of the evening was spent indoors, Becky Moore and her brood being ravenously fed and satisfied by the story of Myrnie's life in Nova Scotia, which they eagerly pumped from her, and when she had done they considered her a wonderful person. Bob sat on the veranda in the fine moonlight playing on his "voyleen," as he called it before stylish company, "fiddle" being used for home folks. Myrnie afterwards found that many men in this neighborhood played a "voyleen," but Grin Oliver was their best musician. How pleasant to be thus thrown among people of her own taste; but her playing did not seem to particularly please the ear of these people at first. They liked Grin's music better; but before she had left them their taste for music had been somewhat elevated.

"I never cared for a 'voyleen' played by note," they said at first. "It is too much like some one crying, and is no good for dancing. Give us the 'voyleen' played by ear."

Another asked, "Do you play the Fisher's Hornpipe, the Devil's Dream, Pretty Little Men in Sandyland?"

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No? I am so sorry. Those are my favorites on the 'voyleen'."

Myrnie went to bed that night feeling very happy, her senses keenly alive to the opening of a new life, strange and extremely interesting. Perhaps it was a bit rough, but the kindness, loving interest and pure minds of the people made it seem exceedingly fine to her. She knew that kindness was not handed around in this wise in every quarter of the globe. This plunge into Cattle Land was new to her, but she, being a true child of nature, was able to appreciate it, not that she recognized it as a distinct type of American life, but her impressionable nature felt its subtle fascination. Its unbounded freedom appealed to her, as she was released from all former conditions.

After she had been in bed for half an hour, she remembered Fred Harmon with a start, for the first time since leaving the cars at Myer. As the slow train had borne her along the uneven road on her way to Myer, she had with difficulty restrained the tears at the thought of the long time that must elapse before she should see him again. But the time since had been so full of crowding thoughts and new impressions that she had almost forgotten his existence. She was ashamed of her negligence, and said her prayers in bed over again, asking God to bless him. But before she slept, she remembered a laughing pair of brown eyes, which held something within them that was compelling, and saw the gleam of even white teeth, whose clean wholesomeness was heightened by the dark tan of a perfectly featured young face.

## CHAPTER II.

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MYRNIE jumped from her bed the next morning at the sound of knocking at her door; she had overslept. Breakfast was ready, she was informed, and by the time she had finished her toilet and come out into the dining-room, the family was seated at the table. The same good cheer and fellowship greeted her as on the previous night.

She gathered from the breakfast-table conversation that a large number of cattle were to be brought to the corrals that day, and branded and separated into different lots. She heard them speaking of the "rodeo," a word whose meaning was unknown to her, but having heard also some conversation about the hay-bailing crews and machine which were at work on Bremister's river bottom alfalfa fields, she had in a confused way linked the two ideas together, and asked quite innocently, "Is the rodeo the hay-bailing machine?"

At this every member of the family fairly yelled with choking laughter. Bob Moore beat the corner of the table with his fist and silently shook from head to foot, with tears streaming down his face, while the boys fell on the floor and kicked the table legs in glee. Mrs. Moore was speechless, and the two girls threw their heads on each other's shoulders to support themselves.



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while they giggled. As soon as Bob could speak, he drawled out between snorts:

"You Eastern school-ma'ams are awfully fine and smart; you know grammar and arithmetic and manners, but there are a few practical things in Arizona that stump you."

Myrnie had laughed with the rest, knowing that she had made another blunder, and as soon as Becky could recover, she wiped her eyes and said:

"Of course it is not strange that you do not know what 'rodeo' means, but you must excuse us for laughing, it seems so funny to us. 'Rodeo' is an every day word with us. It is the Mexican word for 'round-up'. You see, here so close to the border of Mexico, we get into the habit of using many Mexican words that are shorter and more handy than our own. 'Rodeo' is used for round-up all over the southwest. This is the time of the fall rodeo, and the boys have gathered the cattle from the whole range and have them in one herd up in the valley; to-day they will bring them here to separate them into herds of each outfit's cattle. There will be some branding to do of the late calves. It's a good sight, Miss Leston—broadens a body's mind to understand cattle."

"But this is Sunday, Mrs. Moore. Do they work on Sunday?"

"Work on Sunday?" Becky Moore smiled her sweet, compassionate smile, and shook her head sadly with, "Indeed they do work on Sunday. Yes, they generally save such jobs as brandin' or cuttin' out for Sunday. The men enjoy it. It takes the place that base ball takes in your country. These cowboys are proud of their skill with the cattle, indeed they are. When I first came

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out here it nigh broke my heart to see them all work on Sunday. I was brought up religious like, but I've grown used to it now till one day don't seem no more sacred nor holy to me than another. It's a custom of our country, and our customs grow out of necessities, and are not wrong. We even laugh now at the idea of the Sabbath's sacredness. It's a joke among us. But it used to trouble me terribly, and I did a lot of useless praying over it in those days; however, I think I've solved the matter for myself—sort of worked it out by my own needs and experiences, as we have to do all things out here. You see, this is a necessity. There is no church or Sunday school among us, and it comes to me that one day is no different from another. It's all God's time—every day is a seventh day; and by doing our duty, we are keeping every day holy. I know you can't see it that way—you are just from a country where traditional things count. But necessity governs in Arizona, and we cannot afford to pay heed to precedent. We live too near nature, too near to the source of things for that. I like these ways better now, and I should hate to be governed again by those old, narrow ways. Freedom is better than bondage, where there is no evil in the freedom. Our people help each other in a practical way, and are generally square-toed citizens, and that is as good as you can find anywhere."

Myrnie was shocked and a little surprised to hear this woman talk in this way. It showed that she had thought for herself more deeply than anyone would suppose. There was a reason in what she said, though the girl could not as yet approve of her reasoning.

A far away, softened look stole over the mother's face

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as she continued talking, "My children have been to church only a few times. Once in a while some one-horse preacher strays out this way, but generally they are too careful of getting their shoes dusty to come out here to save the souls of the hammerheads. I am satisfied with my children; they live near to Nature, and ain't that God?"

They were disturbed by a sound of laughing, and, looking outside, saw Bob Moore holding his sides while he repeated, "Is the hay-bailin' machine the rodeo?"

And all day long some member of the family took his turn at repeating the question, and to the last day that Myrnie lived among these people it was considered a great joke among them, never failing to put them into hysterias of laughter. All the community heard of it, and Myrnie enjoyed it as much as anyone else.

She, Milly and Grace walked over to the school-house after breakfast to make ready for the opening of school on the morrow. The school-house was a neat, lumber structure of a single room, with up-to-date iron desks with stationary ink-wells. The door and window casings were painted a vivid green both inside and out, otherwise the building was unpainted. There were maps, charts, every kind of needful apparatus, and Myrnie was delighted with the outlook. The dead evergreens of last year's closing day's decoration still hung, dust-covered, on the walls. These were taken down, the walls dusted, and, to the delight of Milly and Grace, were adorned with a number of pretty pictures and mottoes which Myrnie had brought along for the purpose. Thus cleaned and embellished the room was attractive, and the girls left it to go back to the ranch house, for the

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dinner hour was approaching. Outside several oak trees stood near enough to shield the house from the sun, and down by the big spring—Brown's Springs, where the generous stream of water came from under a pile of rocks—stood a number of large cottonwood trees. The spring was fenced to prevent the range cattle from defiling its pure water, but a liberal stream ran truant over the flat below, making, a kind of meadow, called the park, the only oasis of the kind for miles around.

When the girls had reached the summit of the hill, they paused, seating themselves on some flat boulders to rest, their faces toward Myer.

"Do you often go to Myer?" Myrnie asked, again hedging toward a subject of interest.

"Oh, yes; we go often. We just love to go. They have fine dances and school entertainments over there," Grace told her.

"Do the Myer folks come over here to your dances?"

"Not so often; sometimes some of the boys do."

"And girls?"

"There are so few girls in Myer. There is Jane Myer, but she is so stuck-up. Mrs. Lacy comes often. She is a grass widow, and I think she and John Alex are going to get married. The Gray boys come once in a while. Gee, I like to have them come. Don is so fine and handsome."

"I think I saw him. He brought the team to the depot for us, but I did not meet him," Myrnie said.

"Gee, isn't he handsome?" Grace asked, with enthusiasm.

"Do you think so?" was the teacher's innocent reply.

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"He is the handsomest man I have ever seen, and his girl, Kate, is a dream."

"Tell me all about Kate," Myrnie said, striving to conceal her anxiety.

"Oh, but she is not as pretty as you are," little Milly put in, "Her eyes are large and black, her skin is darkish with pinkish spots on her cheeks, and her hair is as black as old Nell's mane, but she is not near so pretty as you are, is she, Grace?"

"I don't hardly know," Grace smiled, speaking frankly as seemed to be the way of these people. "You and Kate are so different. She doesn't seem so fine as you do; her hands are not near so nice, but her waist is lots slimmer, she is slimmer all over and taller. I believe you are really prettier. I used to think Kate was the prettiest girl in the world, pretty as a face on a calendar, but I believe your face is sometimes prettier than any calendar face."

Myrnie laughed at this and said, "Oh, you dear child," and laid a tender hand on her shoulder. This kind of frank admiration came so naturally from these people that she could not doubt its sincerity.

"Well, I bet that you got lots prettier clothes," broke in the stubborn Milly, "I'll bet that trunk of yours is plumb chuck full of beautiful things. When are you going to unpack? May Grace and I watch you unpack?"

"I am going to unpack this evening, and you may both watch me if you will tell me all about Kate. I just love to learn about other girls."

"Bully! Goody, goody!" Milly cried, clapping her hands and dancing around, but when she turned her

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face toward the ranch house, she stood still and exclaimed, "Oh, look yonder!"

Myrnie and Grace turned quickly, and saw the whole trough of the valley, as it narrowed into Dry Creek, filled with a moving, dun-colored mass. Myrnie's first impression was of muddy water rushing forward, but a second glance and Grace's words, "The boys with the cattle," told her what it was.

"We must run to the house quick before they bring them to the corrals, for some of them are sure to refuse to go into the corral at once and may run up here. The whole herd may get started this way, and Papa said there were a lot of old forty-niners among them and this is no safe place for us." And the three girls ran pell-mell, laughing and screaming, down the hill, and came to the house in time for Grace to help her mother with the dinner, for the cowboys, the whole number of them, were to have dinner with Becky that day, another custom and necessity of the country.

Myrnie and Milly ran up-stairs, where from the window they had a good view of the corrals and the cattle. This way and that the sea of animals surged, bellowing and overriding one another, and raising a great fog of dust from under their thousands of grinding hoofs, which with the yells and hallooming of the herders, presented a particularly Western scene—a picture now rapidly passing away.

Myrnie felt a great wave of feeling sweep over her, being strangely moved and mystified, as every one must be when he first beholds a great herd of cattle, and she remembered Mrs. Moore's words, "Broadens a body's mind to understand cattle."

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Finally the herd was packed in the great main corral, where they moved about incessantly. Round and round they milled, throwing up their heads in complaint against this infringement of their freedom and natural rights.

The cowboys came stringing to the house for dinner, and Myrnie heard one of them call out, "Come on boys, to the big feed and get on the outside of your dinner. There is lots of work to-day and no time to squander feeding your faces. What's the matter with you, John? Have you gone back on your hash?"

"Not me," answers John Alexander, whom they generally call John Alex for short. "I can always bank on Becky; she is sure to be there with the goods."

They washed their faces and hands in tin wash-basins which stood on a long bench, dried the same on long roller towels that hung by a fly-specked mirror and comb-case on the porch, flecked the dust from their clothes with their hats, which they threw on the porch floor. Slouching into their places at the long, well-filled table, they fell to eating with a peculiar elation, for had they not heard of the new school-mistress, who, as the story went, was prettier than any calendar face? There were several Mexicans among these cowboys, and these left handprints of dirt on the towels, being, as Sour-Dough Wilson expressed it, "afraid of water."

While the hungry cowboys munched their savory dinner, Myrnie and Milly ran away to the corrals to see the cattle. Milly fearlessly climbed to the top of the fence, but Myrnie stood some distance away, timidly watching the herd of impetuous animals as they circled round and round, never weary of seeking some way of egress, now staring up at dauntless Milly standing

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calmly on the top tail of the high fence, clinging to a post, still higher, while now and then some infuriated, long-horned monster plunged upward at her, shaking the whole corral with his huge bulk, as though an earthquake visited the place. At such times, Myrnie, though brave as she naturally was, quaked from head to foot, and begged Milly to come down, but the little girl only laughed at her fears, and seemed to like nothing better than to torment the untamed creatures by imitating their bellows and waving her red apron at them.

Meanwhile the hungry cowboys were on the tip-toe of eager expectation to see the young lady. They craned their sinewy necks this way and that if they heard a footstep in the adjoining room, or looked out of the windows in hopes of getting a glimpse of her. Each from sympathy understood the desire uppermost in the heart of the other, and some one invariably called out, "rubber" to the one who looked about, and this brought about a great roar of laughter, for the word was new at that time.

Seated there were Sour-Dough Wilson, a man of thirty years, famed for the excellent sour-dough biscuits he made while on the rodeo; Doc Manhart, so called because he performed successful operations on chickens, cutting their crops open with a razor and pulling the grasshoppers out with his fingers, when the gluttonous birds filled their craws so full that they would not digest, and sewing the rent up with a needle and white cotton thread; it was said that he had never lost a case. Doc was custodian at I. T. Steward's copper mine on the crest of Iron Mountain, but he always spent a few days with the boys on the rodeo for the sake of



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good-fellowship. Then came Awk and Dug Bremister, brothers of the beautiful Kate, John Alexander, bachelor from Tonto Basin, and Eshler Morgan, husband to Lucy. Then there was George Overwhacker, little and dried and grizzled, living on the Barba Coma ranch with his dark senora and dusky race of seven halfbreed "muchachos," and Mexican Charley and two other Mexicans who shared equally with the white men. Besides these there were Silvertip, so named because his locks were prematurely gray, the Corkonian, the Terror of Dublin and the Three-cornered Kid, cowboys from the great O. R. ranch, which covers so many acres that they say the children go out to milk the cows and come home years afterward with full buckets, gray-headed men and women.

"Becky, where is that new kid-puncher?" Eshler called out in his thin, piping voice. "Don't she know that these cow-punchers can't eat their dinners for wanting to see her?"

"You bet that is right," Silvertip put in. "Haw, haw, haw!" and they all set up a laugh, as a group of men can do on the least provocation.

"Well, now, you listen to me, boys," Becky Moore's soft voice pleaded, "I want you fellers to be mighty careful how you meet that girl; she is not just like the girls you are used to, she is so tender and refined, and I am sure that we all seem rough to her. She is just a tender flower, and if you hammerheads do not go darned slow, you will frighten her out of the country, and we want to keep her, she is too good to lose." Becky was shaking a hard, knotty fist at them as she finished.

"Wouldn't that curl your liver?" Awk Bremister

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flashed up, but just then they all grew very circumspect. A sweet cheerful laugh rang out very near the door, and sent the warm blood tingling through all their veins. Myrnie and Millie were coming in from the corrals, and were having some rare kind of fun. She came in at the front door, crossed the long living-room and entered her own chamber, and every eye beheld her. Her glorious hair was wind-blown and partly fallen down in disorderly confusion; her soft, white, muslin gown with its short sleeves reminded them of a summer cloud, and the spicy fragrance of rare perfumes floated to the keenly trained nostrils of these rustic fellows. She looked so sweet and clean to them, and brought to the honest and unsophisticated heart of each, a revelation of something higher and better than anything they had ever known. The effect produced was to sober them; they looked into their plates and ate morosely and thoughtfully, not a word being spoken among them to the close of the meal except a droll, "Chase the cow up this way, Eshler," or "I'd like some hen-fruit," or "I think I will try one of those fried holes," or "There, freeze on to that." Each felt some holier thought stirring within him—man's instinctive love for the good and pure in women.

When the meal was finished and they passed outside and took up their labor again amongst the practical affairs, they fell back into their wanton ways, and, much to the embarrassment of Becky's shielding desire, Myrnie heard some one call out in a loud voice:

"Hey there, George, you damned Hassayamper, bring back my hat. I have no use for this louse cage of yourn."

Myrnie spent the afternoon in unpacking, much to the

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delight of Becky and the two girls. So many things had to be explained, and every article examined, that the whole afternoon was thus consumed. When they had seen all her clothes, they thought her more wonderful and grand than ever.

The cattle had been separated, and the cowboys had driven them away, all except Bob's steers, which were to be driven to Myer on the morrow and shipped. These, a great herd within themselves, had been left in the corral, and Myrnie fell asleep that night lulled by the sound of their bellowing, rolling and re-echoing in different tones, like the opening sounds of a great stringed orchestra, testing and tuning the instruments.

### CHAPTER III.

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THE first day of school was one of those fine crystal days of early September, such as would set the mind of even the most practical dreaming of his own vanished school days. But this first day of school at Browns Springs was so unique in character, that Myrnie could make no comparison between it and the school days of her own childhood.

She walked over the hill that morning before the sun had crept down the mountain sides and into all the canyons and hollows, in a fever of enthusiastic interest. Where is the teacher who did not feel this same impulse on the first day of school? She placed her books on her desk, and went outside to sit on the step to await the arrival of her pupils. Here a great sense of loneliness crept over her—such a long time it seemed before anyone appeared. She was beginning to think that she should be compelled to teach the empty benches, when they commenced to flock in from different directions. From over the top of a barren hill to the left she saw a boy on horseback riding toward her, and as he passed over the summit, his form in relief against the vast space of clear sky, he loomed so large and gruesome that it sent a thrill of horror through her. From behind her Moore's four came stringing down the hill. Winnie

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Collins, a girl of fourteen, emerged suddenly from the mouth of a ravine near by, as though she had come out of the earth. Seth Bailey, adopted child of the eccentric Jim, came galloping up on a frowsy burro, and the three grandchildren of Aunt Sally Wilson stood before Myrnie, smiling up into her face, and she did not know from what quarter they had come.

A mile or more away the teacher observed a peculiar looking moving object coming slowly round the curved slope of Brown's Hill. As it drew nearer, the teacher made it out to be a two-wheeled cart, drawn by two burros, the cart containing the progeny of George Overwhacker and his Mexican spouse.

No house, no sign of civilization could be seen in any direction. Nothing but the gray, misty desert valley stretching away to meet the still grayer and more misty mountains, and the red tower-like hills that stood nearer. Myrnie sent up a prayer of thanks for these trees and this spring with its meadow. Here was a little rest to the tired eyes of those who looked over the naked country. It seemed to Myrnie that these children had sprung from the heart of the desert, and were making their pilgrimage to the altar of her knowledge, in a crude attempt to wipe away the illiteracy of their wild country.

The new teacher greeted these children in her natural, pleasant way, asking them their names, and they felt at home with her at once. The big boy who came on horseback told her that he had ridden eight miles from the Hassayampa river, that his name was Ora Pitner, and that this was the first year in three that he had been able

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to attend school because he had herded his mother's sheep for the last two years.

A few minutes before nine o'clock the two-wheeled cart came jolting over the rocks and drew up at the door. Josephine Overhacker long and slim and lean as all Mexican girls are, climbed nimbly from the awkward cart and greeted the teacher with a pleased smile on her dark face, but she did not give the lines over to her brother Eddy who sat on the seat with her, for Yosie (which is the Mexican pronounciation of her name and universally used) was a horsewoman by instinct; she cared for the burros herself.

At first Myrnie thought the cart contained but these two persons, but on looking around quickly, she caught a fleeting glimpse of three black heads and three pairs of round black eyes peering over the dashboard at her. When the three little images saw that she beheld them, they ducked down instantly, and when she stepped up to the cart to make their acquaintance, the three muchachos huddled together in a brown heap on the floor of the cart, and no coaxing, either from Myrnie or Yosie, could induce them to raise their heads.

Presently Yosie's black eyes began to flash, she gathered up a handfull of small switches, and before anyone could prevent the act, was fiercely switching the bare legs of the little half-breeds, at the same time pouring forth a volley of fluent Mexican profanity. At this they sprang from the cart and ran away like young quail, hiding themselves behind the school-house, whither Myrnie followed, determined to conquer their fear of her. She was none too soon, however, the last one had all but crept under the school-house and beyond the reach

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of any grown person. Finally Myrnie, aided and abetted by Yosie and Eddie, persuaded them into a degree of tameness, but it was considered safer by Yosie to close up the opening under the house, which she and Eddie did, piling it full of stones.

Nine o'clock came, and Myrnie rang the bell joyously—if this bell could be made to so ring. It was a home-made affair, having been constructed of the cone-like tin vessel from a top of a heating stove, with a wooden handle fastened to it, and a short bolt tied in by a string for a clapper. When Myrnie gave this to Bob Moore and asked him to buy her a new school-bell, he laughed a good deal, and said it seemed to him that she was getting too particular and was teaching the kids high-toned tricks; but the next time he went to town, he bought a bell of which even she could not complain.

The dignity of the opening of the school was greatly impugned by the bashful obstinacy of the three younger Overwhackers, who had never been to school before, and who made repeated attempts to escape, bolting for the door on each occasion. Aside from this the day was a great success, and Myrnie was made happy in the afternoon by receiving her mail.

Winnie Collins had left the room, and was about to return when a man on horseback called out to her, "Hey there, Winnie, you tell that teacher that I want to see her."

"Doc Manhart is out here, teacher, and wants to see you," Winnie said as she came back into the room.

Myrnie went to the door to find that gentleman sitting calmly on his horse, shuffling over a number of letters.

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"Bet I got what you want pretty bad," he said with no word of introduction.

"My mail," Myrnie exclaimed. "Oh, yes, I have had no mail for four days."

"Us fellers out here don't get ourn but once a week, but with school misses I guess it's different, especially when she gets five letters at once and three of them in the same hand-write. Guess you got that feller goin' east instead of south. Here's one of his letters mailed at Denver, one at Chicago and one at Buffalo. You got him buffaloeed sure." He handed her the letters, but she made no reply to his remarks, simply thanked him a little indignantly, and went back into the school-house.

Later, when school was out and the children had gone home, Myrnie still lingered, reading her letters and thinking of the man whom, Doc Manhart said she had going east instead of south, when she heard a step on the threshold, and looking up, she recognized the glowing face of Grin.

"Hello there, pardner," he called out by way of greeting. "How is school teachin' among the hammerheads and Hassayampers?"

"Fine, thank you, Mr. Oliver, how are you?" she asked.

"Oh, I'm about as well off as you could expect a philosopher to be in a money-loving world. You see I thought I'd come down and chat with you for awhile to keep you cheered up. Hope I don't smell bad, but I killed one of them essence peddlers on my way down."

"What is an essence peddler?" she asked in surprise.

"Well, if you want me to speak plainer, I can. It's a skunk. I left the sheep with Seth Bailey just over the



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ridge there. I've got a pretty good-sized interest in you since I was the means by which you got here, and since you and I are both full-blooded orphans."

"Are your parents dead too?"

"Yes; my father died of chokation. He was a great booze-fighter, and was pulling a cork out of a beer-bottle with his teeth over at Joe's one night, and the cork flew into his throat and choked him to death and no one knew anything about it till morning. It was a good thing, I guess, for I think he died to keep from going to the pen. My mother was a full-blooded idiot. She lived in fear and horror of the insane asylum. Her own mother and grandmother before her died there. Mother died a short time after father went. We never did know what took her off; she just laid down and died one day. Guess she died to keep from going to the insane asylum. I got one sister; she lives in New York and is a virtuoso, gives concerts in the Metropolitan Opera House."

"How very sad," Myrnie responded.

"No, it's not sad. I've been better off without my parents. Reckon that is cruel, but ambition is purely selfish you know."

"Then your parents stood in the way of your ambition?"

"Yes, to some extent they did. My aim is to be rich, big rich. But I'm not a miser like Jim Bailey. That man never sleeps. If he makes a dollar he lays awake all night to tickle himself over it, and if he loses a dollar he lays awake to kick himself, and between the two he gets no sleep. Supporting father and giving him booze money was the only way I could keep him from stealing his living and going to the pen. My mother was an aw-

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ful saintly, good woman. I take after my mother. But I mean to be rich. I've got some good copper claims up in the gulch that are going to make me rich. Just now I am trying to find a suitable name for them. Every mine has got to have the right name, or it sure is hoodooed. Now that's one of the things I've laid awake in the night and dreamed about."

By this time Myrnie and Grin were half way home, for he would go with her to chase away the centipedes, Gila monsters, coyotes and rattlesnakes, or anything like that, he said.

"Now I'll tell you what is fine," Grin proceeded as they climbed the hill," and that is living up at the summer sheep camp. It's a heap better than city life, to my notion. I'll take you up there next May when we open camp. We can do as we dern please up there; eat with our knives, saucer our coffee and have a hell of a good time. You can go about with your shoes untied and your face unwashed, and you won't have to comb your hair from one day's end to another. But the best part is when the ewes get to lambin'. You see when a lamb is born it has to be put to its mother, and I'll tell you, sister, along in May the lambs get to comin' so fast that it keeps you on the jump. The ewes are droppin' 'em all around you till you are busier than a cranberry merchant. Gee whiz! That is life. When a feller has lived like that, he sure knows life."

Myrnie was laughing to herself all the evening and when she was questioned repeatedly about it, she only laughed more and said she could not afford to tell. She was destined yet to make another blunder in her eager

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desire to learn all things. After supper she accosted Bob Moore and said:

"Mr. Moore, I have heard you folks use the word hammerhead so often, and I do not think I know what it means unless it is a kind of yellow-headed bird."

This was ducks for mischievous Bob as well as for the rest of the family. They laughed, as they seemed to so love to do when people made blunders.

"Yes, hammerheads are yellar-headed birds by a damn sight," Bob snorted, and left the house overpowered, and again Becky had to explain.

"I guess you are thinking of yellow-hammer, that is a kind of yellow bird. Hammerhead is a word of our own coinage. We are indebted to Grin Oliver for that word, for he is the man who coined it. It simply means cattle people—a nickname for them."

A few days later a bunch of the cowboys accosted Grin as he sat on a rock watching his flocks feed leisurely in the valley below.

"Hello, Grin, workin' at our trade?" Dug Bremister called out to him.

"Sure, Dug. My cart-wheels are pilin' up as I sit here on this rock philosophizing."

"We hear you have made a mash on the school mistress," John Alexander called out to him.

"That is what I expected to do," Grin threw back at them, elated. "There's my future wife, says I to myself the minute I cast eyes on her." At this the cowboys roared.

"All right, you fellers can laugh, but I will get that girl, and you will see the day. I am a psychic, I can tell things. That is as plain as the nose on your face." Here

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the boys went wild again, tossing up their hats and firing their revolvers.

"Who are you, anyway, Grin?" Silvertip asked.

"That's just it. You fellers don't know who I am. Some of these fine days you are going to find out who you have been running around with all these years and then you are going to feel proud of yourselves and that is what I say."

More laughter from the cowboys, and Doc Manhart called out, "I'll tell you what you are, Grin. You are just common crazy, bug-house, nutty, in other words locoed. Didn't you ever hear that a sheep herder is doomed if he stays with his flocks long enough? You've been with yours five years now. Pretty soon you will be saying 'baa, baa,' and feeding with the nannies all day long."

At this Grin jumped from his seat and commenced to throw stones at his tormentors, but was pacified by John Alexander, who called out, that they wanted him to ride over the country to invite everybody to a dance at Eshler's hall a week from Friday night being as he was so smooth of speech and able to put things in the right way.

"Sure thing," responded Grin, growing enthusiastic again, and forgetting the insults as he always did.

"I'll be there with my voyleen," he assured them.

"Yes, we want you to play, Grin, so we fellers can have a better show with the new kid-puncher. Not one of us have met her yet."

"Well, what's the matter of you fellers?" Grin asked, proudly.

"Oh, we've tried hard enough to meet her, but she

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is shy to meet. She is like your sheep, Grin, she will scatter."

"I'm not afraid of any of you hammerheads beatin' me with—" he began, proudly, but before he could finish the sentence, the cowboys could not be seen for the cloud of dust their ponies were making as they sped across the desert.

The days preceding the dance fairly flew. There was so much to be done; new dresses to be made for girls and women, new suits to be purchased among the men, for each cowboy was bound to appear his best. All the neighborhood was in such a stir over the affair, as scarcely could be imagined. Grin had spent two days on Doc Manhart's swift horse, riding like mad over a radius of thirty miles, inviting all those he met without exception, sending word to others, and dropping notes to those inaccessible, holding out as an inducement that the new school-teacher would be there; and this was sufficient, as Grin intuitively supposed, to set all riding post haste in the direction of Eshler's Hall on that prospective night.

## CHAPTER IV.

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MYRNIE went to the dance with Moore's family, having refused several invitations sent (through Becky Moore) from young men whom she had not met, Doc Manhart being one of the most urgent of these.

The girl's heart beat eagerly as she entered the long, rough hall, decorated profusely with evergreens, and lighted as brightly as oil lamps could light it. There was plenty of bustle and business inside, several young fellows walking about the room whittling candles on the floor, which already shone with slickness. Some were clearing away benches and stools from the middle of the room, and others were busy tending the lamps, refilling them, and cleaning the globes.

To this moving herd of men, women and children, Myrnie seemed the main object of interest. The cowboys and sheep-herders stood in groups outside, rolling cigarettes and bantering one another. From their dark corners of vantage, they could look inside, through open doors and windows, without being seen by those at whom they wished to stare.

Since Myrnie had taken up her life among these people, their world had become her world, their interests her interests. Fred Harmon seemed like a dream to her to-night—far away and vague, and her reality was this

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lighted hall, these people and this wonderful new life in this lotus land of charm. She had received bundles of letters from Fred once or twice a week, when some one was kind enough to bring her mail to her, letters till she grew tired reading them, for he wrote her almost every day such outpourings of love, till it all sounded alike to her. She sometimes forgot to read these letters for a half day. The curious eyes of the whole neighborhood managed to see some of these letters she received, all in the same "handwrite," and Lucy Morgan declared it was a man's "handwrite" and jumped at the conclusion that she was engaged to "so some rich feller that traveled," and told it about for a certainty.

Myrnie answered these letters sometimes, of an evening when her isolation brought memories of him, but her letters were no such outpourings as were the ones she received. She gave these letters to her friends to mail for her, and in no time, everybody was familiar with his name. However, on this evening, the thought of him, indistinct as it had grown to be, vanished quickly. She was searching the crowd for a face she had hoped to meet, and when she did not find that face, her heart and her enthusiasm fell a little. Still she thought he might be outside or that he would arrive later, and she took new courage hanging to this hope. What she did see, however, was women with their tanned faces wreathed in smiles, in anticipation of the pleasure before them, as they dwelt on neighborhood topics; these had their children with them—some mere infants. Their husbands were there with an attempt at dress—high-heeled boots under cheap, striped, high-water trousers, coats too short for them, especially in the back, home-laundered

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collars that soon showed signs of wilting, and every variety of ties.

Cowboys and sheep-herders were plentiful, with wide-brimmed sombreros, white or red handkerchiefs about their necks and black store-clothes cut several years behind the times. Such as these were shod in dancing pumps. A number of these played on mouth-organs with all the frills and accompaniments, as though it were a great accomplishment.

The young ladies were there in home-made dresses, much bedecked with bows of ribbon, ruffles and lace. Myrnie was dressed in a sheer white organdy, but she noticed that the prevailing color among these girls was pink. Rather pretty they looked, she thought, though they were what is generally called "tacky" by the well dressed.

The new teacher received a long line of introductions and felt herself fairly initiated into the circle. The orchestra marched in and took its place on a high platform at one end of the room, being composed of Grin with his "voyleen," who took his place proudly, his socks beaming white between black trousers and dancing pumps; Mexican Charley carried a guitar, and Lucy Morgan, long and slim and red-headed, took her place at the old-fashioned organ.

The first dance was called out in as loud voice as Eshler Morgan could muster, for the honor of being floor manager fell to him, and the players struck up with "Pretty Little Men in Sandyland," and the hammer-heads made a man rush for "pardners." Several of them butted into Myrnie with their "Will you please *exist* me in this dance," but Myrnie had promised her first dance



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to Bob Moore, or rather she had made him promise to lead her in the first dance.

When the couples were in place for four sets, away they went in an "All join hands and circle to the left," like the stampede of cattle with which they were wont to deal daily, environment having so great an influence, but every heart was tuned to a seraphic harp on which an angel played. Myrnie came out of this warm and flushed and smiling, only to rush headlong into a waltz, for she could no longer escape the onslaughts of the hammerheads.

Strange that none of the other girls grew jealous of her raging popularity. Instead they stood about in groups and discussed her in whispers. "Isn't her hair just sweet? I think I can do mine like that. I am going to try to-morrow." Or: "I wonder how that dress is fixed there in the back," or "Ain't she just nice and clever? Not one bit stuck-up." They took it for granted that she should take precedence over them, and were quite satisfied to take second place.

About ten o'clock the two Bremister boys came, accompanied by a brunette whom Myrnie knew at once to be Kate. How like the apotheosis of night she looked in her black gown, her fine black eyes and her raven hair glittering with jeweled combs. Myrnie was frightened a little when she saw how really beautiful Kate was. Kate espied Myrnie at once, and the glances of the two girls as they met for the first time were like two swords that clash in the crossing.

Kate rushed up to the majority of the women and girls present and presented them with a kiss. She met Myrnie very coolly, but it was evident that the two girls

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liked each other better "on further acquaintance," for they spent a part of their spare time conversing, and Kate confided to Myrnie, "We should not have been so late had we not waited for Don Gray, whom I naturally expected would come for me, but I received word through Grin that Don was thrown from his horse and has a badly sprained ankle."

However, before midnight the dark, handsome face of Don Gray appeared at an open window. Myrnie was the first to behold him, and the effect was that of an electric shock to her. He was looking squarely at her, and the influence of his eyes set her heart going like a trip-hammer. Her first act was to glance around to see where Kate was, and finding that she was nowhere to be seen, she frankly returned the smile he gave her, and thus they met without an introduction.

The face disappeared from the window, but presently she heard a soft voice say behind her, "How is life among the hammerheads?" She turned to find Don leaning on the window-sill behind her.

"Oh," she said, "I heard that you was thrown from your horse and could not come."

"Yes, that reached your ears soon enough. I'll wager, but my horses never threw me. That is one good way of getting out of doing a thing you do not want to do. My foot is as well as that of our nimble friend's over there," and the white, even teeth gleamed pleasantly between the clean lips as he smiled.

Myrnie looked toward the platform in the end of the room to see Grin dancing a lively jig while Bob Moore played for him, to the great delight of the house. Kate was to be seen nowhere.

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"Why did you come? You can't dance," she asked.

"Thought I might have one waltz on the sly, and that is all I care for," he told her.

"I feel sure Kate will accommodate you," Myrnie snapped, wishing to recall the words before they were fully uttered.

"I do not intend to waltz with Kate at all. She is the one who is not to be put wise about my foot."

"Oh, excuse me."

"I will gladly. Lucy Morgan's dining-room is only a few steps from here. It is not entirely dark in there, and the floor is fine; you come there when you get a good chance, and we will have a waltz by starlight, and no one to bother us."

"Indeed, I shall not," she told him, firmly.

"I shall expect you just the same," he told her, but just then Grin finished his jig and the laughing watchers dispersed. Kate and some other girls came into the room in time to see Don disappear from the window, and a wild, fearful look came into her eyes, but she carried her head high and pretended not to have seen him.

Presently he came limping into the room and seated himself by Kate, telling her that he had ridden over alone for fun, not being able to keep away. Don glanced toward Myrnie, but saw that his half-brother, Roy Fielding, was talking to her. Soon he limped out of the room and perched himself at the open window, where he remained, watching with interest, sometimes with a cynical smile, the merry dancers. Myrnie pretended to pay no heed to him; she was making herself very agreeable to his half-brother, but a flame of tor-

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ture went through her whenever Kate stopped under the window to chat with him, flashing the dangerous lights from her black eyes.

At midnight supper was spread on a long table which Eshler and others constructed in the middle of the hall, and if ever a table groaned under its load, that one did. Don sat with Kate in a half-sheepish way, which he covered cleverly by the well-directed broadsides which he threw at the other fellows, who answered back with equal enthusiasm. Myrnie was occupied with Roy, and it was plain to be seen that the boy was getting into deep water.

Shortly after midnight a great clamor was heard outside, and with it the gruff voices of men swearing. Eshler was trying to make peace, but with little success. Soon the trouble was explained by the appearance of Jim Bailey, stalking into the hall in a half-intoxicated state, with two heavy revolvers strapped about him. George Overwhacker and Mexican Charley were at his heels, and several other sheep-men hovered near.

"I don't give a damn for petticoats nor kids," Jim Bailey thundered. "The man who is poisoning my sheep will pay for it, and if I can find him here to-night, he will pay heavy too."

The women huddled together in fright, for Jim Bailey was known to be troublesome when in liquor, but he was hurried from the room by a number of men and the wrangle went on from outside.

"This is a great place for him to come to make trouble, here among women and children," Mrs. Collins said.

"But he says some one is poisoning his sheep, and

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he is not the only one who is having the very same trouble. They are up to their old tricks again, and this thing can not always go on," spoke up a woman from the Verde, whose husband owned sheep.

"Oh, I guess it's only a bluff he is trying to work to cover his own dirt," spoke Lucy Morgan. "Only last week Tuck Potter found one of his critters where it had been shot down not so very far from a certain sheep camp, and I guess Jim Bailey does not live on mutton all the year round. This cow had the round cut out. Seth Bailey was seen to have fresh beef in his bucket at school about that time, and did you ever hear of Jim Bailey buying any meat?"

"Yes," put in Mrs. Collins. "Let him take his infernal sheep off this range. This is a cattle country. He has been heard to make his threat that he will have this range to himself in two years more."

Then all the women commenced to talk, taking violent sides one way or another, till it seemed that something must happen.

"Well, now," Becky Moore consoled, "It is bad enough for the men to make trouble about this to-night, and you all know that this is no place for trouble. Let us women folks set a better example by making peace."

At this the groups of women broke up, for they realized that Becky was right, and they told her as much, and became more friendly in their comments; but the spirit of unrest which had been stirred up among them by this occurrence was by no means pacified. It was evident, that the bitter enmity, which always exists when sheep-men and cattle-men live in too close proximity, was astir, and this was the first flashing up

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of the flame that was to burn so fiercely in the near future.

Finally Jim Bailey and his crowd were induced to go away. Mexican Charley was no longer in the orchestra, but there was some one ready to take his place. Several other families, all those who owned sheep, gathered up their belongings and took their departure. Others looked about in an uncertain way, till Eshler Morgan came in and addressed them.

"Now, ladies and gents, do not let this little affair interfere with our dance. This was a put-up job by the whole bunch. Those fellows came here with the intention of breaking up this dance, and nothing would please them so much as to be able to do so, but nothing would beat them so much as to find that they can not do it. Let us not mind them. So get your pardners for a waltz."

These words were no sooner out of his mouth than bang, bang, bang, rang out three guns from a short distance, and the lights were out. Jim Bailey and his crowd had gone a short distance from the house and fired at the lamps through the windows. Consternation reigned, and there were hushes and smothered voices of fear, till Eshler, aided by others, relighted the lamps, put on new globes, and drew down the window blinds. A number of cowboys jumped on to their ponies and followed the culprits, demanding an explanation, but Jim Bailey only laughed loudly, and said that he wished them to understand that they were fair marksmen, and that he guessed it was time lights were out and all good folks were in bed, anyway.

Myrnie was very nervous and wished to go home, but

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no one else seemed much disconcerted, and they all assured her that there was no danger whatever. It was now looked upon as a good joke.

Don Gray came to Myrnie now that Kate had left the hall again, and said: "Wasn't that rich, that shooting? I would not have missed this affair to-night for a good deal."

"I certainly did not enjoy it," she told him.

"Well, I expect you to enjoy it with me. This is the crowning glory of my efforts, and it is rich, rich," and he went away laughing before Kate came back into the room.

It was not long before the whole house was waltzing again, and good cheer returned to every heart. Their wits seemed to be more alive than before.

"Say, Grin," called out John Alexander, as he sat proudly by his widow, "have you found a name yet for your copper mine up in the gulch?"

"Yes, John. I think I have," Grin answered, proudly.

"What is the name?" John asked.

"I've called it Fool's Gulch," Grin said.

"That's a mighty appropriate name, Grin," Doc Manhart put in.

"That's what I thought," was Grin's remark.

"When you strike it rich, you are going to put me in on the ground-floor right, ain't you, Grin?" Doc bantered.

"Let you in? Huh, I'd like to know what you have ever done for me that I am to let you in," Grin flashed back.

"Done for you? Why, I chased the coyotes away from your sheep a number of times when you was

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wastin' your time and breath down at the school-house. What have you ever done for me?" Doc asked, feeling sure that he had the best of Grin for once.

"Done for you," Grin drawled, stepping up before Doc, "why, I named the Gulch after you, Doc. What more could you ask me to do for you?"

Doc joined in the laugh that followed this, knowing that he was fairly beaten.

"Doesn't he just beat everything?" Myrnie heard some one say, and turning, she found Don at her elbow.

"I do not know just what to make of him yet," she said. "Tell me who and what he is."

"That is a question I wish some one would answer for me. I've known him for several years and am not settled in my mind about him yet. His father was a drunken thief, as everybody knows, and his mother, as he himself puts it, was a full-blooded idiot at times—she really was crazy on occasions, and it is hard to say what the combination has brought forth. But he has a sister who is a musical prodigy. She was reared by a rich uncle, and never had much dealings with her own family. Grin goes by the name of fool, but I sometimes wonder if he is not the brightest light this section has produced. Everybody in the Territory has heard about him, he is about the only noted person this section has, and I think we ought to be proud of him. I stay with him weeks at a time, and I find his company very diverting, I never grow tired of him. Some of his ideas and discoveries are really wonderful. Then in some other matters he seems a perfect fool. I think he will lose his mind some day, as his mother did. They do say she was bright at times. I was greatly pleased with him a



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few years ago, at a political meeting at Myer. John Alexander had been nominated for road supervisor on the Democratic ticket, but Judge Owens wanted his brother to have the place, and was using every opportunity to turn the tide of feeling in his direction. He was speaking excitedly and said, 'We do not want a man from over there among those—those—what shall I call them? Someone tell me, quick'."

"Hammerheads!" yelled Grin from the audience, and hammerheads was the watchword of the campaign, and it beat John Alex. Grin was popular after that, and when questioned as to where he got the name, said it was given him on the instant—said he saw the similarity in the shape of a hammer and a cowboy's head.

Don had been so pleasant and sane in this conversation that Myrnie was beginning to think he was what she wanted him to be, and she was in for forgiving other things he had done which did not please her altogether. He arose and limped from the room as the floor manager called out, "Get your pardners for the last waltz!"

Don went out of the door, looking back at Myrnie with the smile in his eyes, and her natural desire was to follow him, but she told herself that she would not. But she saw Roy Fielding coming toward her, and she wanted to avoid him now more than anything, and she arose and hurried from the room before he reached her. She had no intention of going to the dark dining-room, or at least that is what she told herself, but her feet led her there in spite of herself. Don was there waiting for her. She was angry with him because he had taken it for granted that she would come and said, "Oh, you seem

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awfully sure about my coming, but I only came here to get a drink and to escape dancing. I am too tired to dance."

"There is the music—come on," and he held out his arm and smiled at her, "You could not be so cruel when I have not danced this night," and she went to him. She could see his face dimly.

They waltzed away, round and round the dark room with their two hearts beating as one. This last waltz was one of those continuous affairs that you meet with in country places where the musicians play on and on till the dancers tire each other down. Myrnie and Don danced till the last note was struck and she had forgotten all about her fatigue. They heard others coming toward the room and they went each in an opposite direction feeling a strange new thrill and delight permeating their entire beings.

When Myrnie came back into the hall, she found that Roy had not danced. He came to her and spoke in a hurt voice, "You saw me coming and ran. I wanted to dance that last dance with you so badly. Why did you go? It was almost unkind of you."

"I did not see you coming. (Lie No. 1!) I was so tired I did not want to dance with anyone."

"Well, I guess you will let me take you home. I have the crack trotters and the red-wheeled wagon, the best rig in these parts."

They both laughed at this, and Myrnie said she would go home with him, but she lingered till she saw Kate depart. Don Gray was with her and Myrnie's heart burned with anger.

## CHAPTER V.

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THE next Monday at school, Myrnie was surprised to have one of her small pupils come to her crying with the complaint that, "Yosie hit me with a mud ball."

Myrnie hastened out to where her pupils were, and was mystified to find them engaged in pitched battle down by the spring. They were divided into two factions and were stationed some distance apart, mud balls flying freely. The clay below the spring was wet and in good condition to be moulded, but neither side had taken possession of the spring nor forbidden the enemy to make missiles of defence. Each side had two good men at the spring, making balls as fast mud could be rolled, and a boy apiece to carry the balls when made to the seat of action, thus again exemplifying the fair-mindedness of Western people, and illustrating that same principle which the United States government showed in the attempt to subdue the troublesome Indian tribes of the West, when she furnished them with guns and ammunition, and at the same time sent her superior forces against them to kill and conquer them entirely! Beautiful, white-winged mercy!

The perplexed teacher chose different methods and ordered the ring-leaders into their seats demanding an explanation.

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"We do not want to have anything to do with them," Winnie Collins informed her; "their fathers own sheep." The girl went on, assured that she was right, "and they run their sheep on our range and destroy it for our cattle."

"Yes," spoke Yosie, her black eyes flashing fire, "they commenced on us first; they think because their fathers were here first that our fathers have no right here, but my father owns cattle as well as sheep, and my father says, and I guess my father knows, that it is not lawful for them to fence up the water, but that is what they do and my father cuts the wires for them, too, so he does."

It was little Milly who spoke this time, "Yes, and my papa says that if there is one, tiny, little bit of meanness hidden away any place in a man's makeup, that owning sheep will bring it to the surface, and I guess my papa knows."

Myrnie smiled to herself; she could hear Bob Moore saying this in his slow way, and laughing at his own remark as was characteristic of him. She listened awhile longer to the wrangle among the cattle people and the sheep people, before she made any attempt to stop them. It was no easy task to make them understand that this was all wrong, that no matter what took place on the range among the parents, that children must be friends at school, and that she could have nothing of this kind again. They at last promised her that they would let their father's differences pass while on the school ground or when on the road to or from school. However, one boy protested—"Don't let us catch them out on Saturday or Sunday. We will fix them if we do," and with these words they still maintained their principle.

Each day for two weeks after this new rumors came

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to Myrnie's ears about the trouble that was brewing and growing more relentless every day. Seth Bailey brought word one morning that his foster-father was at home very sick. Somebody had broken into his cabin during his absence from home and had "salted" (poisoned) his food, and he had eaten some of it before he detected the peculiar taste.

Children on the other side said that their cattle were being found shot down on the range, and that most men in the community were carrying their guns wherever they went, to be ready if any trouble came up. Rumor had it that John Alexander had been fired at, one day when he was on the range, by somebody hidden in the rocks, and had almost ridden his horse to death to get beyond the rain of bullets that fell all around him. Such reports grew and multiplied till the school teacher was so distracted that she forbid all mention whatever of the subject on the school grounds; but disquieting news reached her from every other source—from family discussions at home and from every ranch house she visited, and she dared not take sides; she must remain neutral.

Three weeks passed since the dance, and she had seen nothing of Don Gray. The words he had said to her on that night came to her often, but she could not understand him. "I expect you to enjoy it with me," and "this is the crowning glory of my efforts." What could he have meant by this?

His brother Roy had not deserted her. He had been to see her on Sundays and often on weekdays. She had treated him in a friendly manner, perhaps because he seemed the nearest link to Don. Then, he shielded her from other tormentors whose presence was more obnox-

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ious, because everybody now began to think that Roy had the inside track with the teacher and there was no use for any other hammerhead to try—all except Grin; he still had hopes.

It was evident that Roy was deeply and insanely in love. He took the merest kindly courtesy from her as a reciprocation of his sentiments. He kept his eyes on her every movement when he was with her, and could not at all conceal the plight of his heart. This troubled the girl a good deal, because she did not know how to put him off, he not being aggressive enough that she could speak to him about it.

Roy and Don, though half-brothers, were of entirely different natures, Roy being after the pattern of his father, Mrs. Gray's second husband, who was a fleshy, blonde German named Fielding, though Roy went generally by the name of Gray because his mother had taken back the name of Don's father. Roy having inherited the dream-nature of his mother, and all the warmth and impulsiveness of his German father, became the kind of lover who dwells in the clouds. All the world was made up of his love, nothing else.

No one about Myer knew much about Don's father. But a few of the old-timers had seen him when he had come back from the sea to live with Mrs. Gray for the second time, and there were whispers about it that were not complimentary to the lady, and conjectures and doubts. But the fact of the matter was that he had been a follower of the sea, light-hearted and filled with the love of adventure. He had married Don's mother when she was a very young girl living in a coast town of Mexico, while his vessel was lying in harbor there for a short time. He sailed with his ship soon after, leav-

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ing his young wife with promises of a speedy return, but she did not see him again for many a day. News came to her that he was dead. Her son was born and she moved northward into the States, and in a time she was married again and in a year from the time her son Roy was born. Her husband died and she was left a young widow a second time.

But Don's father was not dead. He returned to the coast town of Mexico five years later, and finding that his wife had flown, he followed her and found her where she then lived in Myer, and they lived together in a world of bliss for a year or two. But the old longing for the sea took possession of him again, as it always does those of that kind, and he went back to his ship, and never returned; but the lonely woman still waits for him and will not move from the place. This was the man she loved. At the time of these happenings, she was a handsome woman near forty years, but looked much younger. People said that she painted her face and dyed her hair, but I am sure that this was only the jealous hits of plain-looking women. However, her face was like a blossom, with its smooth, olive skin and carmine lips, her eyes being large and brown, and soft as a deer's. I would say that her eyes were compelling, alluring, driving. But at most times, she was a gloom-stricken presence, full of obscure, inexpressible sadness, as if all the forms of torment made weary the soul within. When she spoke, her face awoke into light and most motherly sympathy, her eyes always holding within them misty shadows, as of eyes that have wept too much. A meditative silence hovers around her like that which enfolds the mystic Sphinx in the lonesome depths of Egypt. Her voice held a grievous timber as if telling

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of disloyal love, faded dreams, unfulfilled aims and darksome waste places. This brooding gloom did not always hang about her. There were times when she forgot her sadness and talked like an unconscious child, times when she sang softly to herself, and her voice was then like a lute far away at nightfall—and at such times she was living the past. Times there were also when she laughed gaily, and when mischief peeped from her dimples, for she still kept her dimples; but she favored few with this presence. She remained at home, dressed daintily, and lived her inward life serenely.

Few persons were taken into her life at all and none into the deeps of her silence, not even her beloved Don. Everybody about Myer knew Don to be the favorite child of his mother, and this caused the people in general to cast their sympathy with Roy, whom they declared to be honest, straightforward and open, "But the secrecy of Satan is in that pair, and they are the counterpart of each other." Don was not his real name, but this is what the Myer people called him, because it was believed that he had a hint of Spanish blood in his veins; then he had always held his head high.

It was about this time that Myrnie took to wandering about the hills by herself, beginning to pine for a less disturbed existence than that which surrounded her with its neighborhood quarrels. Perhaps the reader will remember that on the day when Grin brought her to the community, he had pointed out the Black Hawk Stronghold, where the caves under the tall rocks were. The girl became fond of walking the mile to this place and climbing about among the picturesque rocks to gather the delicate ferns and mosses that grew in the damp places. One day when she was climbing about this place,



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she thought she heard someone walking below on the rocks, but when she listened and looked and saw no one, she concluded that it had been the echo of her own steps. But presently she heard the step again, and it was near, and turning quickly, she stood face to face with Don Gray. He was smiling at her and his arms were across his chest.

"Oh," she moaned, all a-tremble, "You frightened me so."

"Frightened you, Myrnie," his fine eyes holding her, "Don't you know I would not hurt a blessed hair of your head?" His soft voice gave her confidence.

"I know, I know you would not, but I did not know it was you; I thought it was Jim Bailey, and he does not like me because he thinks I side with the cattle people."

"How do you know I would not hurt you?" he asked, smiling.

"Oh, I do not know, but I just know it." She was smiling now.

"All right, then, come with me." He held out his hand and she took it and followed him to the entrance of a cave, where they seated themselves on the shelving rock.

"How did you happen to come here?" she asked him.

"I followed you here. I have been stopping with Grin this week, and have seen you out by yourself a number of times, and always tried to catch you, but this is my first success in that line. This is a favorite haunt of mine. I come here often."

"If you wanted to see me so much as that, why did you not come to the house or to the school-house to see me?" She asked innocently.

"Well, I have good reasons not to do that. The kid

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seems so set on you, and mother seems so set on having him have you, and charged me not to interfere. Once before I took a girl from him and he did not speak to me for a year, and mother was awfully upset over the affair. She wants the kid to get married, but it would break her heart if I got jarred loose from her apron string."

"But I do not like Roy. His coming to see me would do him no good anyhow. I never have encouraged him. He puts himself forward and I have had no way to stop him. But I shall tell him the next time I see him."

"I will get all the blame for it, but let us not speak of unpleasant things. We have so little time together," he plead in his mellifluous tones.

"There is so much unpleasantness all among these people now that I have hardly had a pleasant thought for weeks," she complained.

"Oh, these quarrels among the hammerheads amount to nothing. You must not let them bother you. This thing has been going on for years, and nothing serious ever happens. They are a little more upset this time than I ever saw them before. Every Spring this blazes up afresh. I reckon the blood runs fiercer in spring-time. I think it is the greatest fun to hear them make their threats and to see them carry their guns. They do not know one thing against each other of a certainty. This is mostly based on suspicion. They do not want to have any real trouble, and would much rather live at peace with each other; still they must keep up a little peck. I guess it is the gradual decline and death of the dear old Western spirit, a relic of the time that they boast of when they had a man for breakfast every morn-

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ing. I help the spirit along all I can; I try to prolong its life."

"But how do you help it along, Don?"

"Never you mind, I have my part in the game. And maybe sometime I will tell you about it." After this Don changed the subject, and they fell to discussing pleasanter things, and sat together for hours not knowing how fast the time went. There was not a great deal of talking, for it was mostly smiling. These two children were carried away by an overmastering, unexplainable love for each other—a love that had been instantaneous from the first, mutual, marvelous, for two so young. They had confessed this love in many ways and acts, if not in words, and each knew that the other knew that they both knew. They had no wish to conceal this love from each other, and yet they hesitated to speak of it, and this is the sweetest kind of love. Even now as they sat by the cave's sunny mouth, their faces took on divine, smiling expressions. They said little they looked at each other a great deal and smiled.

When it was time for Myrnie to go, she arose and said, "I must go home, now, Don, good-bye," smiling.

"Well, I shall expect you to come here after school on Friday and I will be here to meet you," and he too smiled and stood and watched her walk away. When she had climbed down to the path and had gone some distance, she turned to wave at him, and saw him standing high above her, as he waved a last adieu.

Friday evening found them together at the Stronghold again, and they met there often, not realizing what these meetings were coming to mean to both of them.

## CHAPTER VI.

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ONE evening when Myrnie sat alone, after she had spent an hour with Don at the Stronghold, she commenced to examine her heart to see whither it was leading her. Don Gray had never spoken about himself and Kate to Myrnie and she said nothing about Fred Harmon. Their visits had not been spent in discussing personal things. The girl's promise to Fred Harmon was binding to her conscience. She knew perfectly well how he still felt toward her, and she felt dutybound and determined to keep her promise to him. But she told herself that she still had control of her heart, and would not let that control slip from her. Still she knew that the love she had held for Fred was changed. No, not changed, nor shifted to another, but it seemed to her now that this same love had existed for Don all the time. It seemed to her now, as she puzzled her thoughts over the matter, that it had been the spirit of Don that had come to her on that terrible night in Prescott and breathed this love to her out of the night of fire, and that her soul had opened to it. She did not try to comprehend this strange feeling; it was beyond her at this time, but all this was soon to be made clear. She felt a great pity in her heart for Fred. He was dear and good, she knew and she meant to keep her promise to him. She felt very tender toward Fred when she thought of him, and told herself that she should

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love him the same again when she saw him. She tried to call that love back, tried to coax it, to grasp it. She would hold fast to it; she did not want it to slip away from her. She withdrew Fred's photo from its hiding place, and looking long and earnestly at it, spoke in whispers to it. She called him endearing names as she looked at the picture, recalling all the words of endearment he had lavished upon her, and lived over again the scenes of their lovemaking, but the salt of it seemed to have lost its savor and was tasteless. Still she held firm, and repeated her promise to him.

"I will, I will, I will love you. I will marry you and no one else. My love shall not steal from you. I love you, you, you, no one else." She prayed to God to be saved from this new attachment, and she made up her mind to tell Don Gray about her engagement to Fred and to make an end of this new affair. Why had she let herself adrift, why had she? But now she had succeeded with herself, with her truant heart, she was so sure. And when the next evening came, she was most eager to get away from the school-house and to meet Don. She hurried, almost ran along the stony, cactus-infested path which led to the Stronghold, to make a quick end of her unfaithfulness, and yet as she neared the place, sly little smiles that she could not drive away crept about her mouth, in the happy anticipation of seeing Don once more.

Don was there before her. She saw him high upon the rocks waiting for her, his arms folded across his chest. All went before her in a minute. Her fortified resolve so badly wanted to dissolve. That something which was turbulent and overpowering in Don's influence over her, that something which was tumultuous

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took her by storm. She paused at the foot of the cliff before making the ascent, to take a firm hold on her will, before coming into the full glare of his presence, and he, thinking it was fatigue which held her, came scurrying down to meet her, the dislodged stones rolling before him as they were loosened by his impetuous feet, with his mother's compelling eyes on her, and the elusive, soul-supplying smile about his mouth so unconscious of the state of her mind, and she knew this, so her sympathetic heart made her speak pleasantly.

"Have you been waiting long, Don?"

"Should say I have—been here for two hours; thought you never, never would come," pretending anger.

And this show of anger gave her courage to say,

"Well, I shall never, never come again to this place to meet you."

"Now you are joking," but he looked a little alarmed.

"No, I mean it. I can't come here any more, Don, for I am engaged to be married when this school closes and it is not right for me to come here, I am sure." And she said more in this vein while they climbed up the rocks and seated themselves in the accustomed place.

"I am engaged to be married, too, but what is the odds? We might just as well come here and enjoy ourselves—might just as well."

Then Myrnie told him about Fred, calmly and bravely, hesitating and stammering and almost choking often, but dwelling on the virtues of the man and affirming, that she meant to keep her promise to him. He told her that he meant to keep his promise to Kate, and

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spoke of her good qualities, and in spite of everything this hurt Myrnie so much worse than he knew.

"We might just as well come here anyway, Myrnie—might just as well. There is no harm in this, is there? We might just as well come."

This sounded so easy to Myrnie. He had such an easy way of putting things, seeming to dispose of all the responsibility, and she wanted to agree with him and say too, "might just as well," but she said "No, no," very firmly and was surprised at her own strength.

Don's face did not display the shadow which passed over his soul as he listened to her firm "No, no." He only smiled cynically, and commenced picking up small stones and throwing them at a knot on a box-elder tree that stood near, and hitting the knot nearly every time. After several minutes of this he said:

"Gee, but I pity the poor kid. He is crazy over you—goes about smiling to himself, and shaking his head as though he is talking to some one. I think he is going over every word you have ever said to him—is perfectly lost to his surroundings and speaks of making changes. Poor devil, I pity him."

"I shall tell him what I have told you the next time I see him," Myrnie said, almost in tears.

Don thought for several minutes again, sighed and arising, said:

"Well, then, guess I might just as well forget it; might just as well. But come on; I want to show you my spoil. I told you once before that I have had my part in the fights of the hammerheads, and I will prove that statement to you now." He walked toward the cave's mouth in a daredevil way, Myrnie following in

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the steps he made for her along the rocky way, knowing not what she expected.

He started to enter the cave, but when she was a step within the rocky entrance, she stopped and cried,

"Oh, Don, I am afraid. It looks so black in there. I can't go in. Why do you go, anyway?"

"Come on, girl, nothing in the world to fear in here. Do you think I would take you into danger? I come in here often." He drew a piece of candle from a niche in the wall and lighted it, and taking her hand said, "Come on," and led the way.

They passed through fifty feet of straight tunnel, she trembling a little and wondering if this was a mine, when presently she found herself in a large rock-walled room. There were heaps of something on the ground covered with sheets of canvas. Don let her look all about at everything, then he threw off the canvas sheets and said:

"These things I have cached here so that when Kate and I go to house-keeping, we shall have a good start." There was mischief written all over his face.

Myrnie turned very pale, then stood staring first at Don, then at the heaps of saddles, bridles, tools, bedding, kitchen utensils, spurs, guns and what not. She opened her mouth to speak several times, but her tongue clove to its roof and she stared more, but finally she asked in a firm voice:

"Where did these come from?"

He laughed uproariously, and his laugh rolled about the cave as he answered. "Oh, from one hammerhead and another. Haven't you heard them tell of how their neighbors stole them blind? I've managed to keep the slow fires of enmity burning among them by hooking a



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thing now and then and caching it here. Everybody thinks these caves are filled with rattlesnakes, and they fight shy of coming in here. I started the snake story myself to keep them out."

"Don, do you mean to say that you have stolen these things from the people about here?" she asked, looking at the gruesome shadows that fell in grotesque shapes about the cave.

"I do not call this stealing, this is only hooking. I have no use for these things, and when the psychological moment arrives I intend to restore these to their owners. This is the only amusement I have had for the last three years," he broke out laughing, and continued:

"After I have put certain things here, I have heard the hammerheads cursing each other as they stood at the counter in Myer, buying others to replace them. I always condoled them on their losses and complimented them on their good taste in buying others to replace them, but before they knew it they were compelled to buy yet others to replace those again. There are three new saddles I got from Sour-dough Wilson, till the poor fellow gave up in despair and traded for a worthless old saddle from Mexican Charley which I have mercifully allowed him to keep. And sitting on a hill side, taking good aim, I've brought down a cow, or a burro now and then, never shot any really valuable animals, you know, but when they see them dead, they look very valuable to them. Just the other day I gave John Alex such a chase for his life that you never saw a man get down and dig as he did. I did not allow a bullet to come nearer than three feet of him. I broke into Jim Bailey's cabin and put ipecac into his pot of beans. Guess you heard about those things." He was laughing again.

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"Don, Don, to think Don, to think!" Her voice and her eyes were moist.

He went to her and placed his hands on her shoulders, and said:

"Don't take it like that. It's only a joke. Listen to me—might just as well have a little fun as we go along. You know there has been nothing and nobody to interest me here before you came, nothing to keep me from dying of monotony."

"There was Kate," she snapped at him.

"Yes, but Kate did not make me want to be anybody. I have left this place several times, but mother always calls me back. She is dependent on me and she will not live in any other place, and for what reason I never could understand. I have made this amusement for myself to keep from doing something worse."

"You are the meanest person I have ever known, Don Gray!"

"Now, now, don't you go and say that. I know I am not very good, but I would like to be better, but what is the use now? I thought perhaps that you and I might go away from here when your school closes, and I would make it known to the hammerheads where their lost treasure is and restore peace among them forever more." Here he went off into a fit of laughing, in which Myrnie was forced to join, the tears still glistening on her cheeks.

"There, there, that is right, take it as a joke for that is all it has been." And he took her hand and led her out of the cave, and after looking at her for some time asked her if she would come again, and said that she just might as well, but she refused repeatedly.

He mounted his black mare Fashion and rode away.

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Myrnie walked homeward. She was letting herself drift. She did not try to bridle her inclinations. She loved him, she loved him more than ever now. If he was a mean man, then she loved a mean man. Her thoughts were too full for utterance. Now and then a wave of glad happiness swept over her like sunshine that comes from behind a cloud, and she enjoyed it when it came nor bid it to depart. The gloom came often enough and she was learning Don's philosophy, "Just might as well."

## CHAPTER VII.

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As the days grew warmer and that drowsy feeling which is known as spring fever crept over the children, they began to think "picnic," and to talk it to their teacher.

"It has always been a custom," Milly Moore told her, shaking her wise little head, "to have a picnic on the first day of May, and that is only twelve days away. Shan't we have one this year, teacher?"

"It falls on school day," Myrnie told her.

"But that makes no difference. We never let school interfere with a good time out here, and the trustees always give the teacher the days for picnics and those after a dance."

Then all the children commenced to cry, "Picnic," till they secured the promise for one. Nor was it only the children who were in for it, but the parents as well. Indeed, there was nothing better for them, hard-worked fathers and mothers as they were, than to sit on the grass in the shade of a tree, on a lazy, warm day, and talk of other things than their daily affairs the while watching their offspring gamboling and mingling together in that light-heartedness that belongs to all children under the sun, wherever they may be and under whatever conditions.

There were never any discussions as to where these

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picnics were to be held. It had been the custom for years to hold all picnics down on Aunt Sally's bottom. This was a strip of wooded bottom land which lay along the Ague Frio river, near Sour-dough Wilson's ranch, where he lived with his widowed mother and her three orphaned grand-children. This lady was known far and wide as Aunt Sally, perhaps because she was so light of heart, and always kept on hand a supply of delicious ice-cold buttermilk, which she liberally served to all comers. Every cowboy in the country sang the praises of Aunt Sally's buttermilk. Aunt Sally was a large fleshy lady, and being easy-going as most fleshy people are, she always gave her neighbors permission to hold their picnics down on her bottom land because it was the best place in all the country for such merrymakings.

Large cottonwood trees stood along this bottom land, four of them clustered about the ice-cold spring that gushed from among their roots; green grass carpeted the ground, and birds built their nests in these trees, so that there were always plenty to lend their songs for the first day of May.

Roy Fielding had been making the roads smooth between Myer and Browns Springs. Myrnie had told him of her engagement to Fred Harmon, when he declared his love for her all in the rush and fervor of his smitten heart, but he had let this make no difference to him, thinking no doubt that he would yet "win out against the other fellow."

Now he came begging the privilege of taking her to the picnic, but she said,

"No, Roy, I prefer to go unattended. Bob Moore has promised me and my pupils a hay-ride. They are all to come here early in the morning and Mr. Moore

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will drive for us. Besides, I wish to give my undivided time to the children, for this is the last time I shall be with them in this way. School will be out in a few days and I shall be gone."

"You shall be gone," and he covered his face with his hands, "My God, you will be gone. Oh, can't you love me, can't you?"

But she did not answer this. He had been going on like this before, and Myrnie only said to him,

"You and your brother can come together."

"Oh," he flung back, "I would not be so foolish as to count on him. He will be chasing down country after Kate."

The morning of the first day of May found the whole school, as well as Bob Moore and his wife, piled high on a wagon covered with loose hay. They were dressed in their Sunday best, and all were in the brightest of spirits. They declared Myrnie Queen of the May, and she laughingly accepted the honor, and like a queen she looked and felt, decked in the flowers they lavished upon her, which they had gathered all along the way, for every little while the wagon stopped for this purpose.

Over the road they scurried, up hill and down hill, helter-skelter, with their hearts attune to the spirit of May, and their wagon was the first to arrive at the grounds. Swings were thrown up and other devices for providing amusement and occupation for the active young people.

Soon the neighborhood began to arrive, and it was not long till the grass about the springs was teeming with the happy throng. No wife had forgotten the spacious, well-filled dinner basket, and there was no prospect of anybody going hungry.

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Aunt Sally and her son Sour-dough had walked, the distance being slight, and each came lugging two big demijohns of buttermilk. "Churned this very morning," said Aunt Sally.

Eshler Morgan was there, seeing to it that no one lacked comfort, playing the part of the kind monitor that he was by nature, while his red-headed spouse with her imperceptible eyebrows, sat sullenly by, miffed, no doubt, because she had not been made Queen of the May.

Will Collins and his family came along, with George Overwhacker and his dark-complexioned partner, and the seven "muchachos." The loose cowboys in the community came galloping up on wild broncos, using their spurs freely, making their mounts perform wildly in order to show their skill in the saddle. Some few of them brought girls, or a widow perhaps, but never an old maid, for this is an article which Arizona is not guilty of permitting, though it yields a big crop of bachelors. Plenty of widows too, but their day of widowhood is usually short. Some bachelor, widower, or even some youth ten years her junior will snap her up before she is aware, and she is a foxy widow no longer.

Jim Bailey came to the picnic riding a mule. Bob Moore said a sheep-man would naturally ride a mule, and what do you suppose he brought with him—nothing but his empty stomach. Strange to say that at a picnic, or at any neighborhood gathering it was the custom to forget all differences. Enmity existed only on the range. This was another of the necessary rules of the country, otherwise there would have been few gatherings, scarcity of population forbidding, and when this law was broken, as it had been on the night of the

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dance, a great misdemeanor against the orthodox laws of the community was committed.

Now all these men sat together in a friendly group, lamenting the lack of rain, for no rain to speak of had fallen during the winter and spring, and the range was already becoming dry. There were few places where water could be had in sufficient quantities to supply the stock on the broad range.

Grin Oliver, without whom no neighborhood gathering would have been complete, came walking with his five shepherd dogs trailing behind him. Jim Bailey had allowed him to corral the sheep for this day. Indeed there was no dearth of dogs, and dog fights were one of the sports of the day. Grin was very much overdressed. He had on new ox-blood ties, and what Doc Manhart was pleased to call a hot vest, and socks that you could hear "atickin'" miles away. But bless Grin's heart, his gift was as big as his nature. He carried on his shoulder a flour sack nearly full, and it contained candy and nuts for the little folks, he said.

Myrnie was busy talking to this one and that one, for everybody expected a part of her time. The children, too, wanted her to take a part in all their games. All this she managed to do, and at the same time to keep a sharp outlook on the road. Every horsebacker who came galloping over the smooth road way, sent her heart into her throat till she saw who it was.

Presently all the crowd was astir and the cause, as Myrnie soon found, was that a black-top came spinning over the road, and when the two occupants of the carriage stepped down, the teacher saw that they were Don and Kate. All her courage fled, and she went pale as death. She leaned against a tree to keep from falling,



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and some one near, seeing her plight, hurried away to get water, but she explained that it was nothing at all, and said that it often happened when she was foolish enough to get into a swing, and soon she was herself and went smiling over to meet Kate, who looked splendid in a red dress and veil. She walked proudly along by Don, who wore a sheepish look, and kept glancing around furtively, as though he feared to meet some one whom he expected to encounter here.

Myrnie had been playing boisterously with the children, as the pair walked over the grass, and it had cost her an effort to greet Kate so pleasantly. She only smiled and nodded toward Don, who stood by picking something to pieces which looked like a flower. But the children called to Myrnie, and she was glad to run back to them.

There was no time for ennui in this crowd. Somebody was making rare fun all the time, and Grin seemed to be at the head of this. To-day he was especially gay, and nothing afforded him so much delight as making jokes at Myrnie's expense. The news was out that Myrnie had refused Roy Gray, and Grin had heard it, and was in the best of humor.

"Hey there, Tim Dailey," he called to a fellow from the Verde, "Come over here, I want to introduce you to this little pedagog," and when he had introduced the fellow he remarked, "She is the most even-tempered little pedagog that you ever saw; she is mad all the time." . .

The laugh that followed this had hardly subsided when little six-year-old Sammy Wilson ran up to Myrnie with,

"Oh, teacher, I bet you can never, never guess what we got at home."

"Little chicks?" asked Myrnie.

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"Nope, guess again." And Sammy's hands were clasped in delight.

"Little kittens?" she guessed again.

"Yes, sir, our old cat's got four, and I saw her have every one of them." This threw some of the bystanders into consternation, while some ran away to giggle; but Myrnie tactfully took little Sammy by the hand and ran away to join a game of drop-the-handkerchief.

Soon it was dinner time, and the good wives were busy spreading the contents of their baskets out on white table cloths on the clean grass. Eshler made a quantity of lemonade, and in a short time the whole number of picnickers were seated about the plot of ground covered by the tablecloths, and what had they not to eat? Everybody joked, while Eshler saw that no one was neglected, especially his wife, for if she was neglected he should hear from her later. He scarcely had time to eat for passing about this good thing or that, among the children or to some bashful person.

Myrnie sat with Roy on one side of her and Grin on the other, and needless to say she was not neglected. She was making a great show of pleasantry in order to cover the awful pain in her heart.

Kate Bremister appeared as one who elbows her way into people's notice. This seemed strange for Kate has been a great favorite always. She kept quiet and appeared worn and tired. While her usually clear complexion was marred by brown splotches. The married women looked at her in a hush of wonder, horror and pity in their eyes. Myrnie had noticed one or two of them (who knew Becky well), talking with her in whispers, and her impression was that they spoke of Kate.

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Don, too, had little to offer. He stayed by Kate closely, and if he tried to be jolly, as was his usual way, his jokes were failures. He could hardly carry a laugh to a successful finish, for while his face ought still to be smiling, it sobered quickly and took on an expression of desolate sadness. Now he sat with his back to Myrnie and ate gingerly, as one who is unconscious of what he does. No one could know what he suffered.

And now while they enjoy their dinner, it may be well to say a word further about Kate.

## CHAPTER VIII.

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KATE Bremister was one of those girls who wear bright colored ribbons in a corset cover shining through a thin white waist. Jockey Club perfume was loud about her and she frizzed her hair on hot irons. Her forehead was broad and low, and her eyes sparkled large and soft in their subdued blackness. Rings, earrings, bracelets and jewelry of all kinds infested her person, and red was her favorite color. She looked like a pretty gypsy, with the shapely, brown arms always bare to the elbow. She possessed the agility of a cat, and while she looked lean as she climbed a hillside with her long, graceful strides, she was really quite round, having that shapely liteness of youth, being twenty years old. She had a full bosom and often wore low-cut dresses, all out of time and place. It was reported that once at a dance at McCabe, that as she stooped forward to pick up the handkerchief which she had dropped in the circle of the quadrille, a painful accident followed, which made the girls blush and the boys snicker. She only blushed a little, smiled and replaced her corsage with a smothered oath, and went on with the dance, not in the least disconcerted.

She rode like a cowboy, threw her rope, and never missed her steer. She was off her pony and had her red-hot iron on his hip before the dazed creature knew

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what was happening to him. She shot like a sportsman, swore like a trooper when angry, and was never caught reading a book. The hills and the plains or the back of a horse were calling too loudly to her. She loved a dog and worshipped a horse, knowing a good animal the minute she saw one, and perhaps this had been the one bond that had drawn her and Don Gray together, for man never lived who loved horse better nor who knew a horse quicker than Don Gray. And about this, their one bond of sympathy, their one common absorbing interest, had grown up a love. Only horse-fanciers know how strong a bond this is. I have known it to take the place of love, even the place of a child in holding a pair together, when love was wanting.

In all these things Myrnie Leston was almost the opposite. She wore nothing but modest white ribbons in her corsage and never dressed out of dainty, simple style. She had no passion for dogs and horses; of course she loved a good horse or a nice dog, and could never endure to see any creature suffer for want of food or otherwise; but she was destitute of that fellow-feeling with these animals, which went even to a kind of communion with Kate. She cared nothing for jewelry, unless it be of the best, her language was without flaw, and naturally she was afraid of guns, never having been accustomed to their use. And as for books, she had read hundreds of them, classical and standard, both poetry and prose and liked no other pastime so well.

It is time to return to our picnickers. Here sits Grin, eating his way through one of Becky's delicious pumpkin pies with the remark to Myrnie: "Pumpkin pie always has been my favorite pie, only I hate to eat it because it smudges up my ears so badly." He also re-

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fused the honey that Eshler insisted on giving him, on the grounds that it got into his eyebrows and tangled his hair all up. Presently he picked up a piece of Lucy Morgan's blackberry pie with:

"Hey there, Lucy, what kind of seeds is this pie made of?"

"Hay seeds, of course, same as are in your hair," she threw back vindictively.

And while they all talked and laughed Grin was heard soon again,

"Tell that man over there who has such a long face to wash (meaning poor, bald-headed Eshler), to pass that little girl some cake."

"Now, that is a square meal," he said, when he had finished and stood about with the other men picking his teeth, "Makes an old bach like me feel like cutting his suspenders and going straight up."

Thus the men stood about at ease and comfort, or sat on the grass lazily, while the women cleared away the remains of the feast.

"How is the world treating you, Silvertip?" Will Collins asked. "I have not seen you since the dance."

"Oh, I'm treating myself better these days than I used to, and I find when I treat myself well, I have no trouble with the world."

"But is it true that you are on the water wagon for sure, as they tell me?"

"Well, I'm on till I fall off, I reckon. A feller who has hit booze as hard as I have, can't say for sure what he will do."

"Heard Joe's cook wiped up the streets of Myer with you last time you was over; that true?"

"Joe's kitchen mechanic and I did get busy with each

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other, and made a few feathers fly, but he did not get the best of me. I caved in about half his slats on his larboard side before I finished with him."

When the meal was cleared away, and the baskets again placed under their respective wagon-seats, somebody proposed the ascent of Eshler's Peak, the base of which stood only a half mile from the picnic grounds, and in a short time the whole band were traveling in that direction. Even the grown folks acted like children, racing to certain points and challenging each other to all sorts of feats. Becky Moore and Jim Bailey ran a desperate foot race to a mesquite bush in front of them, and you can bet on it that Becky won the race.

Kate and Don still kept close together. He helped her over the rough places tenderly, and the sight of this sent an ache to Myrnie's heart that was hard to bear. She could not stay with Roy, who fain would have lingered by her side. She ran away with Grin, for this was the most diverting pastime she could devise and poor Grin took this for a sign of special favor in his case. He kept up a constant flow of surprising wit, which, despite the girl's anxiety, kept her laughing. Grin was at his best, and as Doc Manhart said, "He pranced gaily along, far out ahead of himself, his coat barely hanging on the pits of his shoulders."

Grin felt sure, very sure, that Myrnie was beginning to love him. He would show these hammerheads after all. Surely God was on his side to-day, he told himself.

The summit of the peak to which they were going was crowned by an outcropping of iron, which stood in a rim around the outer edge like a wall. On top of this natural battlement some prehistoric race had built a rock wall four feet high. Perhaps it was the

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Aztecs, for that æsthetic race roamed over this part of the States before the days of Cortez. It was evident that some warlike tribe had built this means of defence. Loopholes had been left in the wall at intervals, and could be seen now by those making the ascent, though much of the artificial wall had fallen down.

There was but one place at which one could reach the table land on the top of this peak, and this was a narrow defile up between two huge bowlders, but if it had not been for the shrubs of tough greasewood and scrub cedar that grew firm-rooted in the crevices of the rocks up this defile, I doubt if anyone could have reached the top. But if one clung to these brush, stepping in the niches of the rock, the ascent was possible for grown people, easy for young folks, and a delight to the boy or girl of twelve.

These shrubs had not been in existence when the ancient race used this tower of defence. No doubt they had employed ladders made of rawhide or of bear-grass, which they took up and let down at will. What a point of vantage this must have been to whatever belligerent race that held it. A scope of country for a hundred miles could have been guarded by the outlooks on the top of the wall. If an enemy attempted an attack, they would have been discovered hours before they reached even the base of the tower. And if they tried to ascend and take the fort, it would have been an easy matter to crush them by hurling stones from the wall above. If a pack train with provisions crossed the valley, far or near, it was an easy matter to keep an eye on them, to locate them at night by their camp-fires, and to scurry down while the guileless victims slept, surprising them and plundering their camp.



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But imagine Becky Moore being helped up this steep place by a dozen men. She did not scream out and giggle as the young girls did. No, Becky clung and climbed desperately, with red face covered by beads of perspiration, and even if her dress did slip up to the great bend and show her left, had not Becky a perfect right? But the real fun was when Aunt Sally was dragged up. Aunt Sally weighed two hundred and twenty-five pounds. I refuse a description of this.

The most surprising event of the day was that Kate Bremister had to be helped up this place. Kate Bremister helped to climb, she who had been reared among rocks and hills and had scaled every cliff in the country for many miles around. This sent the married women's heads together again in whispered conversation.

Now every one has gained the top. Let us enjoy the view with them, but first examine the ground at hand. There is more space on top than one would suspect who viewed the peak from its base, perhaps in all two acres of level rock, while here and there a little plot of earth filled a depression where weeds and flowers grew and even bloomed in the rainy season. In the center of the space stood the ruins of a huge stone house, a crude fort, built no doubt in defence against storm and the sun's extreme summer heat. To the east and to the west of this house were two long paths, worn down a little lower than the surrounding ground. These were the paths in which the ancient people performed their grotesque dances to the sun, for Sun Worshippers they were. The path to the east was for the worship of the rising sun and that to the west for the death of Sol.

The infinite stretch of desert lay far below and all around. It wandered away to the west, to meet the high

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broken mesas, dim and misty in their varied color of rock. To the east, where the valley narrowed into a long pointed sword between the converging mountains, could be seen the deep, flinty sides of the canon that the Ague Frio had cut through the low pass in the mountains. To-day a herd of antelope could be seen feeding up toward the end of the valley, but they were far away and appeared not larger than chickens. Sometimes those who were more fortunate met the drove of wild camels which Fate had placed in this region. These creatures when encountered in the desert do not run away; they stand and stare drowsily, or else do not notice one at all, seeming to know by that power of oriental instinct, which they bring with them from the sands of Arabia or from the great Sahara, that they are protected by law, having been brought to this country in the early days of Western settlement, in the hope that they would prove useful ships of the desert on this side. But the manner of man on this side did not understand, and had no patience with the slowness of the creatures. When the animals were found to be unavailable, they were liberated to roam the desert and to multiply in their slow way, having been supplanted by the mule and the burro. It is both a surprising and an inspiring sight to meet these graceful creatures in an American desert, and brings to one's mind all the stories ever read about the caravans in the sandy wastes of the Orient.

Our friends looked about them with interest. The majority of them had been to this place before, but this did not prevent them from growing silent and thoughtful as though the spirit of a vanished race still lingered round the spot.

Don Gray stood apart from the rest on the top of the

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wall, seeming to be lost in a maze of regrets and hazy imaginings, as his eyes met the misty distance over the tops of the countless ranges of mountains that lay in folds and wrinkles till the eye failed to follow minute details in the distance.

I can not tell what Myrnie's thoughts were. She too sat on the top of the wall at the opposite side of the circle, looking far away at nothing, as though her thoughts were adrift.

"This makes one feel like being a poet," Roy Gray remarked to Kate, as he came where she sat on a rock, her head bowed, her eyes on the ground.

"That's one of the things I've lain in the night and dreamt about," put in Grin, and his words brought every one back to reality. "There is no use in being a poet or a novelist. There is just one trouble about it, and that is that you enjoy it all before you get it. If you could only wait till your book was published and you had the money, before you enjoy the money and the fame, there would be some sense in it, but—hell! I wrote a book once. Before I had finished the first chapter of it I had enjoyed the fame and the money in my mind. I had my mansion on the Hudson, had lived three weeks with the actress I had married, and was whizzing around in my big red automobile. Well, the damned book kind of dragged after that, but I finished it and sent it to some publisher—about a dozen different concerns, but none of them would have anything to do with it. Finally I burnt the manuscript and there is where I threw up the cheese on bein' a novelist. What was the use? I had been the novelist in my mind and I wrote and told some of the derved publishers so, too."

Few took much stock in what Grin had said. Some

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one said "Puff," but no one else took any notice except Don and Myrnie. They exchanged glances of understanding and smiled in mutual appreciation. This speech gave them another glimpse into the mystery of Grin's nature, and eased the pain in both their hearts since they had enjoyed one moment of understanding on common ground. After that the situation seemed a little less tense.

Of course, Becky Moore had to add her remark, and it was, "Well, I don't want any novelists or poets or such like among my children. I am satisfied if they make good, common clod-hoppers."

Now it was time to go home, and down the mountain they commenced to file. Myrnie and Grin keeping a little in advance of the others. All were running or skipping, for the hill was steep, and, as Milly Moore said, it was hard to keep one's break on. A dismal rattling sound came from the ground at Myrnie's feet, and every one knew what it was at once, for this is a sound, once heard, never forgotten.

"Rattlesnake," yelled several at the same time, but before anyone could say "scat," Grin had snatched Myrnie in his arms and off her feet, and well that he did, for the snake was coiling to strike. Then, a dozen men commenced throwing stones at the startled reptile, and it squirmed toward Kate. She swooned, but came back to consciousness quickly and saw Sour-dough Wilson pinning the serpent to the ground, where it soon departed this life.

Grin stepped before Myrnie with a great show of feeling and shouted, "Girl, I've saved your life, but I don't expect you to fall in love with me for it, as the sayin' goes. I'd have done the same thing for a nigger, so

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you are under no obligations to me and that's the kind of a feller I am."

Now, the killing of a snake was a common affair among these people. Kate Bremister had killed many of them herself without a tremor, but to-day she fainted at the sight of one. This sent together again the heads of the married women, the old hens.

But the cowboys picked Grin up and carried him on their shoulders to the foot of the hill because of his gallant speech. He bore the ride in anger, kicking and pulling hair and swearing in an undertone. What did it matter if John Alexander did get a bloody nose? He and others were having their fun at Grin's expense, and that was worth such a price.

The day was drawing to a close, and when our friends reached their wagons, they piled in and hurried home, having that spent feeling which always comes in the wake of a picnic.

Kate and Don rode home almost in silence and Kate could feel that there was a great distance between them, while she readily divined its cause. I would rather not tell you of the temptations that struggled in Don's mind as they drove by the dangerous, deep canyons along the Ague Frio, and when he looked down into these, the Devil's eggs of crime hatched in his brain, but he thought of Myrnie and was ashamed and crushed them all. Give him some credit for that. But, Oh, how he wished that things were different and that he had known Myrnie a few months sooner, before he had tied his hands by an engagement.

## CHAPTER IX.

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MISS LESTON had the privilege of riding Bob Moore's horse Buck when she choose. She had never cared particularly for this pastime, as it was too rough and hard, and the sun tanned and the wind blistered her tender skin. However, on the evening of the next day after the picnic, she asked Bob to saddle Buck, and feeling that she must have action, some decided action.

Over the plain alone she flew. Buck had been standing in the stable for several days and wanted exercise, and so was soon on a dead run; it seemed as if nothing could stop him. On he rushed, through weeds and shrubs, for miles, till he came to the draw where the willows and tall cat-claws grew, and into these he dashed, while they clung to her skirts and tore her dress as she dashed through. She was not rider enough to use both hands on the rein, but had to cling to the horn of the saddle with one hand, to keep from going over the horse's head. The horse was fast gaining mastery over her and she knew it as well the horse did. Her hat was gone, her hair down and flying to the wind. She had no idea how far she had gone, and was beginning to wonder how it would ever end, when suddenly a man on a fine black mare dashed up beside her and had her horse by the bits in an instant, soon bringing him to a halt.

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Myrnie turned to thank her rescuer but recoiled on discovering that it was Don Gray. Striking his hand with her whip so as to leave a red mark, she demanded,

"Let my horse go!"

"He is running with you and would throw you. I know this horse, and Bob Moore is a fool to let you ride the brute alone. I have followed you for three miles, and no telling how this would have turned out if I had not seen you. Fashion can overtake any horse in Arizona."

"Let my horse go, I say. I was running to please myself."

"Now, Myrnie, you know you were not. I will not let go. You could not hold this horse."

"Go away and leave me, I tell you." She was angry.

"I will not do that either," was his reply.

"What will it please you to do then, Don Gray?"

"It will please me to stay here and talk to you."

"Talk to me in secret on the range, but be careful that a pair of black eyes do not see you."

"I wish the whole world would see me with you tonight, whether red, green or black eyes, now that I am free."

"Has some one had strings on you?" she asked with sarcasm.

"No, not strings, but cables. But the cables are broken now. Read this letter," and he held the paper toward her.

Myrnie took the letter and this is what she read,

Don:—In accordance with your request, I return your ring. I would keep it, only I have no place to put it.—Kate.

As Myrnie looked up from the paper, her eyes held

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Don's for a moment, then she covered her face with her hands and broke into a nervous laugh. In spite of her determination to be angry she was so happy. She was so glad the note had said, "In accordance with your request." She took her hands down from her face and gave the letter back to him and said,

"Really, it is a very well written letter, Don, and I can't help admiring Kate when I read it."

"Kate is all right, Myrnie. Kate is a good girl, a fine good girl, but it seems she is not the right girl for me. I once thought that I never could grow tired of her love. Now I see what an awful mistake I have made. But I cannot help it. The mistake is made and it will have to take care of itself. You have taught me a new kind of love. Oh, Myrnie, a new kind of love." Don's face shone as he leaned toward her.

"Oh, you did love her then?"

"I think I did, Myrnie, as much as I knew how to love any one at that time. But I have grown, grown a million years in love since then."

"How long since you ceased to love her?" (Observe how well the general surveys her field of battle.)

"Since that night when I saw you in Prescott."

"You never saw me in Prescott, Don Gray." Myrnie's head was on one side, in her most saucy attitude, for she felt that she was master of the situation; but she certainly was not prepared for what he said next.

"Oh, yes, Myrnie; don't you remember the night of the fire, when I threw the rope over the bed post?"

"Oh, Don, Don!" and she caught her breath with difficulty. "Of course, that was you! Now I know it was; now I understand it all. Now I know who I loved that night, it was you all the time, *you*—not



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Fred." She was quite overcome with delight and Don drew his steed up close to her and took her hands.

"Myrnie, I have known you all this time. I left Prescott two days after the fire, but in that two days I tried every way I could think of to find you. How I longed for you!—and that smile of understanding and appreciation you gave me, and you touched me with this little hand." He was covering her hand with kisses when their horses commenced biting at each other and fighting, as horses sometimes will do at such times. The lovers dismounted, and tying their horses to the ground, cowboy fashion, they walked away. He took her hand again.

"I am sure," he went on, "that nothing but the strength of my longing for you brought you out here, and I was so greatly surprised, and yet it seemed so natural, when I saw it was you that day at Myer. But you did not know me, and I have wanted you to discover me. I have loved you all the time."

"Then why have you hung after Kate all the time since I have been out here. I could hate you for that"

"Kate has had strings on me of late, and one must be careful how he deals with Kate. I had to bring her to just the right pass to manage her and it took a long time."

"Then that proves that she had a power over you, which shows that you are weak and afraid, and I do not like weak cowards." She drew her hand away with a jerk and fastened up her glorious hair.

"Oh, no, no, Myrnie, don't, don't, please. You can't understand yet for awhile," and he took her in his arms while she struggled to get away; but he managed her and covered her face with kisses.

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Once conquered, she was as gentle as a lamb. She turned toward him, put her arms about his neck, and drawing his face down to her own, kissed him in the sweetest possible manner. (This was what she had been wanting to do for so long!)

The twilight drew on, the wind tossed about among the willows and cat-claws, and a cactus bird was singing the sweetest song ever heard. And there they stood. Don't ask me what they did or said! They were two young lovers in that supreme moment when they find each other.

"I was on my way to tell you all," he told her as they rode homeward, "and to ask you to go away with me soon. We could go on the evening of the last day of your school, only a week away. I will come with a carriage as though I am to take you and your trunk to Myer, but instead of going to Myer, we will turn off the McCabe road and will be in Prescott in the morning. We can be married there, and go on to Denver. After a while we can come back here if you wish. Mother and Roy would get used to the thought after a time, and so would Kate. Just at present it would throw them into consternation and make us lots of trouble. I have plenty of money. Will you go with me, Myrnie?"

She just looked at him and smiled and nodded her head for yes. Then after a little she said,

"But I should prefer never to return here. I have learned since I knew you that I never could love Fred Harmon again, and I do not care to see him now. He is so much older than I, and the fact that he has been married and has a child separates us. I want someone

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near my own age with whom I can grow and develop equally."

"I will tell Grin about the hidden treasure in the caves," Don said, "and he will be delighted to be the peacemaker. We shall leave peace among the Hammerheads at any rate!" And they relieved their tense feelings by laughing freely.

All their plans were laid carefully. Myrnie commenced doing little things that would go toward being ready on the eventful night, and she could hardly control her happy thoughts. Don's hands were as busy as his brain, still he was a little uneasy. The days did not fly fast enough to suit him. He was a little uncomfortable all the time, being too eager to get away. Little did he realize how much was to happen in the next few days.

On the evening of the last Thursday, before the close of school, Grin made his way to the school-house with the mission of his life in his hands. He had no doubt but that he would meet, with success, and these were to be the last really happy sane moments Grin was ever to spend. His purpose was to find Myrnie alone, but three of the school children still remained, loth to part from their beloved teacher, who was to be gone from among them so soon.

Grin stepped inside the house without a word, and stood looking at Myrnie. She and those about her looked up in surprise to see the expression which rested on his face; a look of half hope and pleasure, half pain. It went from his face quickly as Myrnie arose and said, "What can I do for you, Mr. Oliver?"

"I want to see you," Grin faltered. His face was now abashed, but red and freckled as of old.

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"Very well," she said, stepping near him.

"Yes, Miss Leston, but I want to see you vacantly," awkwardly fumbling with his hat. At this the children hurried away giggling, and the two were left alone.

"What do you wish to say?" she asked, wishing to help him out of the embarrassment which bound him.

"That's jest it. What do I want to say? I know well enough but I do not know how to commence the thing."

The girl felt very sorry for Grin, but she did not suspect his purpose at all.

"What are you going to do when school is out?" he asked, after a whole minute of silence.

"I have hardly decided yet but I am going to Prescott first."

"You goin' to teach here next year?"

"The trustees have asked me to do so, but I have not decided yet."

"Better come up to the sheep camp and spend the summer with me."

She looked at him in horror, and seeing this and understanding her, he added quickly, "as my wife, you know, of course."

"How preposterous!" she exclaimed, showing her disgust.

"You are not too good for me. I can tell you that. I saw you with that Don Gray. Guess you want him."

"What makes you think so?"

"Oh, just because I have got such a good guesser. He thinks I have no say-so, but I'll let him know that my say-so is worth as much as his say-so. You think he is an angel. Lots of girls think that. I could tell

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you something about him, but I won't, that you would be surprised to hear from a Dutchman."

"I fail to understand you. Why do you come to me like this?"

"Well, then, I'll be plainer. I love you. Understand that? I want to marry you. Understand that? I am a pure man. Understand that? But I guess the world ain't lookin' for virgins to-day, neither he-virgins nor she-virgins. But now I've had my say-so and you can do as you please with it."

"I have always valued your friendship, and appreciated your many kindnesses to me, but I never thought of loving you. I do not care for you in that way at all, so let that be an end of this."

"You are the doctor, mam. I am glad you have liked me. And if you ever to marry, I hope you are happy." He turned and walked away hurriedly.

The bewildered girl looked about her vacantly, wiped away the moisture that had come to her eyes, and sitting down to her desk, laid her head on her arms on the desk, and laughed herself almost into hysteria. She arose and walked rapidly home, only to find more tumult there.

Grin walked home with his heart way down, down. He felt that he had done it all wrong and had lost. But he called his philosophy to his aid and was too egotistical in this philosophy to despair altogether.

He turned and looked behind him when he had reached the hilltop, and saw Myrnie climbing the slope behind the school-house. He snapped his fingers at her and said, "Let'er go as she looks," and walked on, but the words cost him a great effort, and tears commenced pouring from his eyes till he could hardly see. He

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stumbled and several times almost fell, but gaining his feet each time, and said, as he wiped the moisture away, "darn the sweat!" And from that time till he met his death a few days later, he wondered why that sweat would come of a sudden, when he was not overheated at all, and why the sweat was accompanied by that dry aching in the throat.

Don Gray met him on the range the next morning, as he peacefully tended his flocks, and sitting on a rock opposite him, he commenced,

"You and I have always been good friends, have we not, Oliver?"

Now, Don had never called Grin "Oliver" before, and the word seemed to place restraint between them and Don felt it in the hush that preceded Grin's answer.

"Friends, yes, I reckon, but what is it you want me to do for you now, Don?"

Don felt a chill creep up his spine and over his scalp, but he waded in and told of the hidden treasure in the cave, and of the part he wished Grin to play. He had planned this scene that morning as he rode over the plain; and in his mind he could see Grin rolling about and laughing. He had expected that Grin would enjoy it all immensely.

But Grin only looked across the valley away from Don, and without exhibiting any surprise or emotion, answered,

"Why, yes, if these people have been deprived of their goods these three years, they ought to have them returned to them. I will attend to that for you, Don."

Don Gray wished that the earth would open from under, and swallow him. He sat awkwardly kicking the ground with the toe of his shoe.

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"Guess you are gettin' ready to leave this man's country," Grin remarked.

"Why do you think so?" was Don's interrogation.

"Because I've got such a good guesser."

Don got up and walked away. He took the path that led behind the near-by hill. He could not bear the thought of Grin's watching him as he walked away for any distance. In all his experience Don Gray had never felt so small, and weak, and mean.

Grin was again troubled with the sweat in his face, but he struck up an old hymn and sang as loud as his voice would carry. The song echoed and re-echoed about the hills and the singer was somewhat comforted.

## CHAPTER X.

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WHEN Myrnie reached her boarding place, after Grin's declaration, as has already been said, she met a greater tumult than even Grin produced in her heart.

As she came down the hill before the house, she saw Lucy Morgan getting down from her flea-bitten gray mare. Myrnie noticed as she passed the animal, tied outside the yard gate, that it was wet and covered with lather. Now it was only two miles to Lucy's house, and the girl knew that Lucy must have ridden much farther than that and very fast to bring her horse to this condition. It came to the girl's mind that Lucy must have some rare gossip, and was spreading it over the community. A thought of some serious neighborhood trouble and Jim Bailey associated themselves in her mind, but when she entered her room, she could plainly hear Lucy's voice from the kitchen saying,

"It was born last night, weighs only eight pounds. Eshler met Dr. Parson this morning on his way back to Myer, and the doctor said Kate was doing fine, but the baby is awfully weak. Said Mrs. Bremister had sent to Prescott for Father DeLany to come to christen the baby; she is afraid it might die unbaptised. But I can not see what good the priest can do now. The mischief is done and the disgrace is on them."

A realization of the terrible truth came flashing over



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Myrnie, and she felt as if the ground under her was rocking and rising up. She caught a chair and fell into it, trying to think, but her mind seemed in a hopeless whirl. Then past events came trooping to her memory clearly. She thought of the hints dropped by the married women on the day of the picnic, remembered that Kate had been so unlike herself and had swooned, that Don had said Kate had cables on him. She thought of his feverish haste to get away from the neighborhood. She could see through all this now, and the realization turned her soul to wormwood.

Lucy had made a pause that her hearers might grasp the magnitude of her story, but now she continued:

"Kate Bremister ought to be drummed out of this country on a rail, and by the married women too, and I am willing to lead the crusade. I shall never look at her again. Just think how she has deceived me, and I have always been her friend. I shudder to think that I kissed her the last time I saw her. Ugh! The dirty thing."

"Why, Lucy, you should not feel that way about it," Becky said.

"You don't think I should?" Lucy's hair commenced to raise and grew a shade redder, if possible, and she raised out of her chair a little as she went on,

"Becky Moore, I have always been virtuous. My poor old mother, who is now in her grave, taught me to be virtuous, and I can say with a clear conscience that I am pure, pure. And do you think a pure woman should kiss a dirty hussy like that?"

"Lucy, I am sure poor Kate's kiss did not soil your spotless virtue. I pity the child. I have never kissed Kate, but if I could see her now, I think I should."

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"Becky Moore, I am surprised at you," Lucy yelled.

"Not that I uphold such things, Lucy. No, no, God forbid! But it helps no one to be so hard on those who make missteps in this world. The girl is young, and we all know her to be a right-meaning girl. This is but a fatal misstep, and I think we all ought to help her up so she will avoid such again. That is not the way to reform the world of women, by throwing stones at them. We never know what may happen to our own. Every woman, if she is honest with herself, hearing of such cases as Kate's, feels shame rise within her at the weakness of her sex. She feels sometimes like shunning the offender, but is she worthy to do it? Are her own hands so entirely clean? Has she always been, is she now, so free from any unclean thought or desire that she can spurn this miserable woman? Every mother must admit that the temptation that came to this unfortunate girl may come to her own daughter, not perhaps in this same form, but the form is immaterial. Once John Wesley, seeing a thief go by him on his way to jail, followed by a hooting mob said, 'But for the grace of a good God, there goes John Wesley.' And I think we may well pattern by him. What mother of us but can say, hearing the story of Kate, 'But for God's mercy, there goes my own daughter!' We are all of the same blood in this world, and the sins of the father's are visited unto the daughters as well as unto the sons. If only those sneered who have never received God's mercy for themselves or for their dear ones, who would there be left among us to point the finger of shame at poor Kate?"

"There would be me, Becky Moore, me. If none else, then there would be me!" Lucy fairly hissed with

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rage. "And here I am to point my finger at you, Becky Moore," a long, slim, freckled finger was drawn at Becky, and there were little tufts of red hairs between the joints, "for I doubt your decency. How can you uphold crime in the face of your own daughters?"

Tears coursed down Becky's cheeks as she answered, "Don't be too hard, Lucy, not so hard. When I think of Kate, I say, God be merciful to me, a sinner."

Grace Moore went to her mother and kissing her, turned on Lucy. The girl must have lost control of her usually silent tongue as well as of her temper as she broke out,

"Do you know who it is that turns women down in this world and makes it a bitter place for them to live, Aunt Lucy?"

"Yes, Grace, it is the whole world when they do wrong."

"No, Aunt Lucy, it is the women, and do you know what class of women it is?"

"Don't you dare to tell me that it is the women who do those things themselves, Miss Grace," Lucy hissed.

"No, Aunt Lucy, it is the woman who wants to do those things but has not the independence nor the courage to do them!"

Lucy turned to Becky, "Now listen to that, Becky, and from your own daughter. I do not intend to have anything to do with Kate Bremister nor with those who approve of her."

"You do not need to," Grace flashed out again, "What can you know about a mother's feelings. You can't be a mother. We all know you, Lucy. I think I would rather be bad, bad, and do as Kate has done, and have a little charity and love in my heart, than to

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be like you with your warped cold heart and your boast of virtue! But who knows whether you was so good or not? You might have been bad for all anyone knows. Nature had no way to tell on you, deficient as you are."

Becky arose and wiped her tears away, gently pushing her daughter from the room with,

"Child, child, what is all this you are saying?"

"Well, I don't care! She can't come and talk to my mother like that." And Grace flung out of the room.

"Now, Lucy, there is no cause for us to have any difference over this," began Becky, but Lucy interrupted with,

"You hear how your daughter talks after your example. Good-bye, Becky, I hope the dear Lord will keep you and your daughters from evil, but I doubt it sore." And flinging out of the house, she straddled her gray mare and galloped home, baffled and angry.

Poor little Eshler caught it good and hard that night because he would not promise never to go within speaking distance of Kate Bremister again. Lucy had galloped all over the neighborhood with her story, and Becky was not the only woman who had pitied Kate, and Lucy was sorely beset.

When Lucy had gone, Myrnie went to the kitchen, where Becky sat paring potatoes, and a mother's sacred tears were falling on the parings, but she looked up at the girl and smiled with,

"I am so sorry, child, that you have heard this. I wish you might have gone away without knowing it."

"Oh, that makes no difference, Mrs. Moore. I admire you for the way you look at Kate's misfortune."

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"That is the way I see it, and I never could be a hypocrit. I have offended Lucy, and Lucy means well."

"A boy baby, did she say?" Myrnie asked nervously.

"Yes; a little boy. My heart breaks for Kate's mother. She is my best neighbor."

"My heart breaks for Kate," the girl told her.

"I am glad you have charity, child, for it is those without it who are most liable to fall."

Myrnie went to her room and closed the door. She seated herself by the window that looked down Dry Creek. She said she did not care for supper, and indeed she forgot all matters of common routine, for she did not even remove her clothing that night. It was moonlight and a light wind was playing about. The weeping willow tree that stood by the window rapped its long arms lightly against the panes, and the sweet odor of wild blooms came in through the open sash. In the hushes that the wind made, a cactus bird sang out strong and clear, as though there were not a sorrow in all the earth's vast expanse. But Myrnie's eyes were still dry, their lids burned with dryness and stared wide open as she sat repeating these immortal lines of Burns:

Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon,  
How can ye bloom sae fair:  
How can ye chant, ye little bird,  
And I sae fu' o' care!

Thou'll break my heart, thou bonnie bird  
That sits upon the bough:  
Thou minds me o' the happy days—  
When my fause Love was true.

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Thou'll break my heart, thou bonnie bird,  
That sings beside thy mate:  
For sae I sat, and sae I sang  
And wist na' o' my fate.

Aft hae I roved my bonnie Doon  
To see the woodbine twine,  
And ilka bird sang o' its love;  
And sae did I o' mine.

The next morning the saddened girl appeared perfectly calm and natural. No one knew of the awful struggle and agony of the night, as no one knew of her love for Don Gray.

At school that last day she was her same sweet self to the children. She smiled when they came to her expressing their love for her, and their regret of losing her. But she found it hard to control her mind. There were times when she scarcely knew what she was doing. A kind of unnatural haze filled her thoughts, and all seemed like a dream, in which nothing mattered any more. There was a great sinking in her heart but there was no bitterness for anyone, except at moments when little belated flames of hate flashed up for Don Gray. These died quickly, and then she could have wept that her heart could ever be like that, for the one who was altogether lovely. It seemed then that he was dearer to her than ever before.

Evening came somehow. This was the evening that she was to have gone away, and she realized how differently she should be feeling now if she had not heard. She bade her pupils a loving good-bye, kissing every one of them, even to big Ora Pittner, and walked home-

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ward over the hill—the dear, familiar way. Every little bush, every cactus, every turn in the path were so well known to her. This same path had always been a way of gladness to her, but this last time it was a bridge of sighs. Her step was slow and heavy, and now and then she struck her foot against a stone. Her feet had been so light on this path before. She noticed all the land-marks along the way, and said good-bye to them. Her thoughts were a mingling of many things, and were sad, infinitely sad.

Clouds had been gathering, appearing and disappearing for several days, and during the evening there had been hints of thunder and lightning. Little ribbons of fire flashed here and there along the horizon and then came to her ears distant rumblings, which Myrnie had taught the children to call Henry Hudson playing at nine-pins.

## CHAPTER XI.

---

ARIZONA is a land of extremes. There is a well-founded adage among old settlers in the Territory, that "when it rains in Arizona, it pours." This may be interpreted in many different ways, for when drouth comes in Arizona, it is dry, dry and a long time dry; when hard luck strikes you in Arizona, it strikes you hard; or, when you strike it in Arizona, you strike it big rich, etc. This is no half-way place.

When Myrnie reached the ranch house that evening, she found Grin sitting on the veranda with Becky and the children, discussing the prospect of the much-needed rain. The girl feared that he had come to renew his proposal, but she changed her mind on this point when he greeted her, for his eye met hers, honest and straightforward, unflinching.

She sat down with them to rest for awhile, feeling that their honest hearts were a comfort.

"I smell a flood," said Grin, jumping to his feet and trotting out into the yard, holding up his nose and sniffing the breeze, like a dog, as it came down from the eastern end of the valley.

"Smell a flood?" said Myrnie, "What can you mean?"

"I mean that I smell a flood," persisted the sheepherder, "Can't you see that it's rainin' up there in the



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mountains forty or fifty miles from here, and it's been rainin' up there nearly all day. See how the clouds seem to come together and pitch and fight each other, and then pour down on the mountains. That is sure to send a flood down here."

"How far away is the flood?" she asked him.

"Oh, I should say twenty miles. It will be three or four hours before it gets down here, I should think; but a flood is sure comin', and mind my word, she is a big one. I can smell it plain."

"But how could you smell it if it were twenty miles away?" she persisted, laughing at the idea.

"All Hassayampers and Hammerheads can smell floods even if school ma'ms can't," Grin added, a little vexed because she doubted his word. And then he went on in a mild way, "The sense of smell gets mighty keen in these high, dry altitudes, same as the brutes. But it is like this. A flood in this country sweeps before it much filth. You see horses and cattle, as well as other animals, go to the river during a drouth to get the water, that sometimes stands in the deep holes along the river bed, and finding it not, they die there. And when the flood comes, it pushes all this ahead and that singular kind of breeze that travels miles in advance of the flood, carries these odors on its breast. It is a mixed smell of carrion, mud and rotten wood. But I sure do love the smell!"

"Well, I don't care about the flood," said Becky, "But I sure would like to have some of that rain down here."

Myrnie went to her room, changed her shoes, brushed her hair carefully, and leaving the house by a back way, commenced walking in the direction of Myer. She

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walked rapidly, for she was thinking rapidly. She expected to meet Don, and she did not care where. She had proceeded only a mile, however, and was in the dry bed of the Ague Frio when she met him.

They both stopped and looked at each other, Don smiling his happy fascinating smile, as he said,

"Too eager to stay at home? Come jump up here and ride back to the house with me. We will have to hurry, for I am afraid that a flood will come down and cut us off from the Prescott road to-night."

She looked at him without reproach, and asked mildly, "Do you think I am going away with you, Don?"

He thought she was playing with him and answered, "I'm going away with you, at any rate."

"You are going to marry Kate Bremister. She has borne you a son."

"My God!" He muttered. His face was ashen, he sat like one with a chill, shaking from head to foot. For a long time he could not speak, and during this time Myrnie looked at the ground. Then he burst forth speaking to himself,

"I thought that would not happen for a month yet, and we would be away and she would never know."

"And there is where you miscounted," she said coldly.

"I thought you would never know," he repeated.

"Oh, Don, Don, I might have known, I might have known. But no, I trusted you."

"But Myrnie," he threw his lines on the ground and jumped from his seat beside her, "that all happened before I knew you. I never could have done like that if I had known what real love was. You will forgive me, Myrnie. We must go, all arrangements are made." He stood in an attitude of appeal, his arms stretched out to

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her, all the suavity of his nature coming to his aid. His eyes were soft and painstricken and compelling. "We might just as well go now, Myrnie; might just as well."

The distraught girl stood for a minute in a whirl of indecision, her desire to go to him and say, "Yes, yes, Don," was powerful, but she thought that he must have looked like this to Kate when she gave up to him, and she stood still looking at him.

He continued, "What is one child more or less in the world, and what is the difference who is its father? They are nothing to me. No one is anything to me but you, you are strong, and good, and could not be induced to give yourself up wrongfully. Can't you see that I could not care for Kate after this?"

"Can't you see that I could not care for you after this? Kate is better than you are. The words you have just spoken show you to be unworthy the name "man." Is there no father-feeling in you, Don?" Her last words were a whisper. "No father-feeling to be awakened?"

Don folded his arms across his chest and replied, "The old man sleeps."

"For shame, Don, for shame. You are just a rogue."

"I have often suspected myself of being a rogue, and I have tried to reform, but reform does not seem to be in me. I hate myself. I have struggled hard. What can you know of this struggle, you who have no desire to break laws and be wicked, what can you know of this struggle? I have come to the conclusion that I have inherited a love of lawlessness. There must be an awful strain of blackness back among my ancestors. If you do not go with me I can't help it but if you do

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care for me yet, you can purge my life to cleanliness. Will you go with me, Myrnie?"

"Don, you just said that I was not a woman who could be induced to give myself up wrongfully and you spoke true."

Hearing a mighty roar, they looked up the stream, and there not fifty yards away was a breast of water six feet high bearing down upon them. The flood came as Grin had predicted, and it was a big one; they had been too deeply engrossed in their own affair to hear its roar till it was almost too late.

They both knew that they could not reach either bank of the river.

"We may reach Ell's Isle," he shouted to her, for the din of the water was almost deafening, and taking her by the hand they ran desperately to the little island that stood, brush covered, in the midst of the stream. Don had to drag Myrnie up the steep bank.

On top of this island they were far above water and there they stood, bewildered, trembling, unstrung.

The water now was all around them and its roar was so great that they could not hear each other speak. He tried to say something to her but she could not hear his words—she finally understood by the motion of his lips that he said, "horse," and looking across the stream, she saw the two horses entangled by their harness in some brush. They were 'above water but the light wagon had broken away from them and had been carried down the stream.

Speechless, the two prisoners stood, watching the water climb higher as darkness commenced to creep on. It commenced to rain heavily. Lightning and thunder flashed and rolled about them, and the rain came down

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still harder. Don put his coat on Myrnie. She cried silently as he did so, the kindness touched her so, but it was dark and he did not know that she cried. The rain washed the few tears away, and soon she had to discard the coat to get rid of its weight, for it was drenched.

The incessant flashing of the lightning illumined the water, showing them the objects which the flood carried on its breast and brought floating past them. Logs and whole trees still leafy and green and piled up and over-riding one another, came plunging directly toward them, till it seemed that they would tumble on their tiny island and crush them, but the bend in the river always carried them past. One of the large cottonwood trees which had stood on the bank of the stream along Aunt Sally's bottom came floating past with a dead cow entangled in its branches. Don and Myrnie recognized the tree as well as the cow. It was one of Aunt Sally's best buttermilk cows. She had a bobbed tail.

Chicken coops, small outbuildings, broken timbers, and wagons—anything and everything came by, and the two island prisoners stood and watched it all as intently as though their lives depended upon it. The rain subsided, and when their ears had become more accustomed to the noise, they could better make each other understand what they were saying.

Suddenly a lingering flash of lightning revealed a part of a haybaling machine entangled in a canvas wagon sheet. It came very near to them, and Don said, "Alas, the rodeo," looking at Myrnie. She returned his look without a change of expression. No doubt it was the only time that joke was sprung without provoking laughter.

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"The flood will have run past by midnight," Don said. "Then we can——"

But Myrnie interrupted him, "We are here till day-break, Don."

"Well, even then," but his voice trembled so that he had to commence again. "Even then, I can get Grin to bring a team and we can go. You and he could go back to Bob's and get your things. I do not wish to see people, now that this thing is out."

"No, I should not think so," she said.

"I suppose it is in the mouth of everybody," he faltered.

"Lucy Morgan, with the co-operation of her gray mare, spent the whole day yesterday, spreading the news, and I imagine it is pretty well out," was her frank answer.

"The old hell-cat!" he muttered; but in the face of all this, he still hoped. "It will be all right, little girl; you know that I love only you. It is all right." He took hold of her arm ecstatically. It seemed so hard for him to give up hope.

"This is the end, Don Gray."

"Not the end, not—not the end, not that."

"The end of everything, even life, Don."

"No, no," he fell down on his knees, and clasping her about the limbs, he pressed his face against her body. "No, no, not that."

She drew away from him and going over to the lone tree, leaned against it wearily. It was the only large tree on the island; it forked about two feet from the ground, spreading out into two large branches, and the girl seated herself in this fork. Don remained on the ground where she had left him. A rift in the clouds

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showed the bright moon coming up from behind Eshler's Peak, and this light, along with the noise and crash about him, brought Don to a realization of his surroundings. Then the clouds came together again, and all was dark. They continued to open and close alternately, giving the lonely figures light and darkness by turns.

Hearing a great splash in the water, Myrnie hurried over to Don, but she found him standing quite still where she had left him, as though he were trying to collect his thoughts. The noise had been caused by a great chunk of their island which had been torn off by the force of the water. The girl took him by the hand and led him like a child to the tree, wondering at her own great calmness.

"Our island is being washed away, Don. There may be none of it here by morning. The water is still rising, and it is already about our feet."

He made no reply, so she repeated her fears, but he seemed to take no note of their danger, notwithstanding the fact that the sounds of loud splashes which continued to come to their ears should have convinced him that their place of safety was growing smaller every hour.

Don was pacing back and forth now like one frantic. She could see his face pale and haggard in the moonlight, when it came, and his eyes, how they stared! She could feel the tree quiver and shake beneath her, and she know that its roots were being undermined by the water. Even this did not alarm her. She still sat in the fork of the tree and Don continued to walk. Hours went by, when she felt him trying to clasp her in his

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arms. She almost felt afraid of him, he acted so strangely.

"Don, Don, do you realize the danger of those who live below here?" She asked, pushing him from her.

"My God! My God!" she heard him mutter. "I can swim, Myrnie, I will go to them and save them. I will save them."

"No, the water is up to your knees. You could do nothing. It is too dark. You could do nothing."

"No, I could not leave you."

"Have you no feeling, Don, no feeling? You know what I mean—no father-feeling?" Her voice was a whisper in his ear.

"God! my God," was all he said, but she thought there was a hint of sob in his voice. He went on.

"I could not leave you here alone like this, but Myrnie, I want to see my little child, I do want to see it." He broke into sobs that were violent and terrible. It was an awful struggle. His dormant manhood was being brought to life at this hour. How easily and carelessly this fellow had taken life; how irresponsible he had been, thoughtless of everyone but himself. He had been able to laugh and joke in the face of any great calamity, and this must be either a very great or a very depraved soul. I leave you to judge which of the two was Don's. But now he was beginning to feel the great tragedies of life. It had taken the love of a good and pure woman to bring him to this.

Myrnie was happy. At last he had redeemed himself in her eyes. Though she never see him again, what matter? He was a man and she had not been mistaken in her judgment of him—yes, he was a man.

When he became calm, he laid his hand on her arm and said,



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"Pray, Myrnie. You are a good woman, and God will hear your prayer. Pray for them, and tell God I promise to do right by them if he will but save them."

And Myrnie prayed as she had not prayed in all her life. Her own feelings and desires she sacrificed completely, pouring forth the plea with all her strength of her being for the safety of those two lives that had crossed her own. When she had concluded, a great silence fell upon them. It continued for hours, in which both had a peculiar feeling that great distance was growing between them; they felt far, far apart.

By the sounds about them they could tell that the water was subsiding but still they watched and waited without speaking. And by the time dawn came peeping into the Eastern end of the valley, the river was not more than a foot deep. Daylight showed them that more than half of their island had been washed away, being composed of loose, rocky soil, and the great forked tree which was now leaning in the direction of the river, had half of its roots washed bare.

Don, guarding against the quicksand, led Myrnie in a roundabout way to where the horses were.

"Which horse is gentle to ride?" she asked.

"Puss is perfectly gentle," he told her, knowing where she meant to go.

"You go to Myer," she commanded.

"Tell her I will come about noon and bring Father Delany. He will still be in town."

"I will make it all right with her, Don," she said when he had helped her on the horse.

He stood with his arms folded across his chest watching her till she was out of sight, then, mounting the other horse, he rode to Myer, his head bent, his eyes on the ground.

## CHAPTER XII.

---

MYRNIE was obliged to pick her way carefully along the course of the stream. She followed the well-worn trail where she could, but in many places it had lain so near the river's brink that long stretches of it, having become soaked by the water, had caved off. At such places the girl was compelled to go higher up on the hillside and through the brush. The original path had crossed the river at many sections, winding its way first on one side then on the other, wherever there was room for the path along the narrow canyon. But now Myrnie had to keep on one side of the stream all the way.

The destructive influences of the flood were everywhere apparent. Trees and brush along the river brink had been washed out by the roots and had accumulated in great piles of drift where the stream had overrun its banks. The little school-teacher saw all this through tearful eyes. The belated tears had commenced to flow soon after she left Don; the drouth which had held her in its grip was now at an end, and a flood of tears now blinded her sight. She soon wiped them away, however, and slowly made her way through the rough canyon. Her heart was broken but there was enough excitement in that which lay before her to carry her on to the end of her mission. She urged her lagging steed on up hillsides so steep as to be dangerous, down precipitous

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banks where she was compelled to dismount, through thickets of mesquite whose sharp thorns tore her wet skirts into rags, and across deeply cut ditches in which still ran rivulets from the saturated earth.

Puss was sure-footed and did not stumble, but she always wanted to jump the ditches and the cautious rider lost much time in her efforts to prevent this.

The clouds had all passed away, not even a whitehead anywhere to explain all this wetness. Every bush and every blade of dead grass hung full of liquid beads, which glittered like diamonds in the bright sunlight. (The sun had already risen.) Such a fragrance as arose from the earth, and how the birds sang! But all this gave the little teacher no comfort; she scarcely noticed these things. The darkness within her own soul threw shadows over all the brightness. Earth now wore its blackest pall for her. It took her three hours to cover the three miles. When she came to the open fields, at the upper end of the Bremister ranch, she stopped and gazed before her, appalled. Great areas of the soft rich bottomland had disappeared, had been eaten away by the water's sharp teeth.

"How can the house still be there?" she asked herself aloud, in horror. She knew that the house stood on soft ground and not far from the stream. She dreaded to go on over the rise in the field which hid the house from view, knowing not whether she feared the house was gone or was still there. She stood, hesitating.

"If it is gone," she whispered, "if it is gone? He has proven himself a man." This brought a great sense of rest to her heart. "If they are gone, maybe I could forgive him, perhaps—"

Her words were cut short by the sight of a man com-

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ing over the rise, leading a horse. It was Mr. Bremister, and he was walking calmly as though all were well with him. Myrnie spoke to Puss and the horse moved forward, but the man had turned out of the path before she reached him. His head was bowed in thought. When she reached the summit of the rise, there stood the house in its accustomed place among the cottonwoods, with the dogs and chickens moving about in their natural way.

"Kate might have died in the night; sometimes they do die afterwards." This she told herself like a drowning man who catches at a straw. When she walked upon the porch and knocked, she fully expected to be confronted by the assertion that Kate was dead. But alas, her active imagination had led her astray.

Mrs. Bremister met her at the door, and it would be difficult to picture the surprise in the woman's face as she stood staring at the bedraggled girl.

The weary visitor noticed that the face before her was haggard and tear-stained, as though the woman had wept all night, and this made Myrnie's own trouble seem less terrible to her. Pity, sympathy—wonderful and tender, instantly welled up in the girl's heart, and she was ready to sacrifice herself for this grief-stricken mother.

Mrs. Bremister had thrown up her hands and stood, unable to say one word.

"Oh," said Myrnie, looking down at her dress and thinking of it for the first time, "I have been out in the rain all night but I have come to see Kate. I know everything."

Mrs. Bremister still stood in the doorway, barring

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her entrance as though she could not grasp what Myrnie said.

"I have brought good news from Don for Kate." Her sincere look and sweet tone reassured the woman, who said:

"Come in, child, come in. Let me give you dry clothes. This is liable to give you your death. How came you in this plight?"

"I was caught on Ell's Isle by the flood and held there all night," Myrnie said, and while she changed her clothes, she told the woman as much of the fabrication, which was rapidly weaving itself in her fertile brain, as she thought wise to unfold just yet.

When she had finished, the newly made grand-mother opened the door of the adjoining room and said, "Here is company for you, dear! are you ready just now?"

Myrnie stepped inside the room before the invalid could answer. Kate seemed unable to believe the evidence of her own eyes. She had raised herself on her elbow when her mother spoke to her, and Myrnie saw by the light and hope that lurked in her eye, when she first entered the room, that Kate thought it was someone else. Myrnie saw this expression change quickly to one of fear and alarm, and the young mother fell back on her pillow.

The girl walked toward her and tried to smile with these words. "It is only me now, Kate, but Don will come at noon to-day. He told me to come to tell you."

"But how does he know that I want him to come?" was her heated interrogation.

"Oh, but you do, Kate," she said in her sweetest tone.

"I do not think I do. I have gone this far without

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him and can go the rest of the way, little as he may doubt it."

"But you do want him, Kate. He will bring Father Delaney, and he wants you to marry him. Don would have come now instead of me, only he wished to catch the priest in Myer."

"That he should have done a long time ago, Myrnie." Kate's voice was more tender now.

"Yes, Kate, but—but—but you know how funny men are about such things."

"But how came you here like this with word from him?" Kat still doubted the girl's sincerity.

"He loves you, Kate; loves you dearly, but his pride made him shrink from this. His mother, too, has such a power over him and he shrank from what she and the other people would say. But he is so sorry now that he did not do right by you long ago. He wants to make amends."

"Oh, he does? Well, if he had suffered death a hundred times in the last few months, yes, worse than a hundred deaths, then what people think and even his mother's feelings would be as nothing to him."

"Yes, Kate, but it is only given to women to suffer like that. He was coming to see you, coming by the Browns Springs road because he wished to see Grin and get him to do some errand for him, and I was walking alone as I do so often, it was pleasant and cool, you know, and we chanced to meet in the road in the dry river bed. We talked for a few minutes, and suddenly the terrible flood was upon us before we knew it. We could not run to the banks but just barely reached Ell's Isle and there we were held all night."

"But why did he stop to talk to you? That sounds

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unlikely if he were coming here so quickly and eagerly. Did he dare to mention anything to—to—to you, about this?" The black eyes were flashing.

"Oh, no, Kate. He only asked me to carry the message back to Grin because I told him that Grin was at the house; he was doing that because he wanted to get here all the sooner."

"What was the message?"

"Why, he—he, why he wanted Grin to go to Myer to bring the priest for him."

"Then what happened?" Kate asked.

"He never would have mentioned you to me if the flood had not held us on that island all night. Think of it," and Myrnie put intensity into her voice, "held on that little piece of ground all through the black night and the merciless rain pouring down and the raging flood eating our island from under us, the water rising round us higher and higher every minute. We did not think we would ever escape from the island alive, and as you can well imagine, he was crazed with anxiety and all barriers fell away. He thought this house would surely be washed away and you with it. He bound me to a piece of log that lodged on our island and told me what to tell you if you and I escaped and he did not. He cried awfully, Kate, and said he wanted you and his little child."

At this point both girls broke down; Kate from sheer happiness, and Myrnie because she was so carried away with the pathos of her own story, and because the flood of grief within her had not yet spent itself. Mrs. Bremister had stood like one stricken while the narrator told her rapid story; now she fell upon her knees to thank the good God who had heard and answered

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her prayer. She would do her penance gladly now, would wear green, the color she most disliked, to the end of her days.

Kate reached out and grasped Myrnie's hand, and Myrnie understood that this was her thanks to her, but she was unable to return the fervid pressure which Kate gave, and left her hand lay passively in that of the invalid. Thus they wept, the dark head quite near the fair one. Is the world of women indeed so unjust, so unfeeling? Is there no love and charity existing in the hearts of the sisters of this world. They tell me, "No."

Perhaps those who read this story will look upon Kate as something vile and upon Myrnie as a saint and an angel. But this is not so. The universal thought of the world is much biased in these matters. Fundamentally, no doubt, Kate was as pure as Myrnie. Their circumstances had been different, that was all.

Myrnie had been tenderly reared and carefully guarded from infancy. Every thought had been moulded for her during her childhood; she had been surrounded by refinement, culture, and was educated. She knew life through the medium of the best literature, had been environed by a religious atmosphere, taught to fear evil for its own dire effects, and, having been gifted with pure instincts, was able to resist most forms of temptation.

Kate, on the other hand, had been left to discover all things for herself. True, her mother was a Catholic, and Kate called herself the same; but Mrs. Bremister was a woman who forgot her religion except in cases of dire need. Such religion is a failure. You can not make a cat's paw of God. To Kate religion was only a word. She knew little of the delicate lines between



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right and wrong. Her companions all through her life had been cowboys,—good fellows, to be sure, but rough. Of schooling Kate had received little. She had never been taught to read good books. She knew only the things that speak from the hills, the rocks, the range and the wild places. These are pure teachers, all, if the mind is developed to an extent to grasp their magnitude. Kate, however, recognized only the material nature of these things. Such surroundings may keep a man primitive and honest in nature, but they are hardly the influences which bring out the spiritual nature of woman-kind. Kate was of a nervous, active temperament, not having that command and power which comes with repose.

Mrs. Bremister arose at length, and stood looking at the two girls. She smiled and said:

“Come, children, let us brace up. This is not so bad as it might be.”

“No, indeed,” Myrnie added, drying her tears in a relieved way.

Kate came out of her tears laughing. For a month, or since the day of the picnic, she had not seen Don. She thought he was lost to her, had deserted her; that she was to go alone through this dark gorge of shame. Now that haunting dream was dispelled. He was coming this day to make her his wife; he loved her, he loved her still. Oh, this was too good to be true, surely, after all her dreadful sufferings. She talked and chatted gaily, a pretty pink coming into her cheeks.

“Well, well; this is a jolly old world after all,” she said, “I’m hungry, mother dear, have you any of that quail broth left? Do bring me some. I can drink a barrel of it; bring some crackers, too.”

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Mrs. Bremister went to the kitchen to get the food and Kate went on,

"Oh, Myrnie, don't you want to see my little, wee little chicken? It is just a little two-by-four and is just like him—its eyes are his." And she drew an uncertain looking bundle from the back of the bed, while poor Myrnie thought she should strangle, her heart came up and choked her so. At that moment she thought she would break down, but she prayed to be made stronger, and Kate did not see her emotion, being so absorbed with her own interests. She went on with her chatter:

"You know Myrnie, we are just the same as married; we are married. Love is the only marriage. What is a foolish ceremony? Does the Bible not say there is no sin committed if they marry afterwards? Ho, ho, what does this silly world know about anything anyhow?"

But Myrnie scored one on Kate for her boasting exultation when she calmly replied:

"Kate, I would rather be married by a ceremony beforehand."

"Oh, yes, of course, I suppose so, if one cares for others. Pooh, I care only for my Don."

Myrnie's face went white as she looked at the little, red, wrinkled individual, who would not open his eyes enough to see what they were like, but closed and unclosed his silly little fists as though it were a great accomplishment, and worked his button-hole mouth as though he were as good as anybody's kid. Kate went on talking to her incomprehensible treasure in a fond mother's silly way:

"Oo is dest mover's wee, one chicken, ess oo is, too."

"I am sure he is just sweet," Myrnie managed to say.

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But Mrs. Bremister came back with the broth and crackers and Myrnie arose to go. I think Kate was relieved to have her depart. But Mrs. Bremister came to Myrnie, and taking her hand said:

“God will bless you for the work you have done this day. What a blessing you have been to this community in every way! It must be a great comfort to you to think of it.”

Myrnie only smiled sadly and bidding Kate good-bye, wished her happiness, to which Kate could not reply, but looked into her eyes frankly. Mrs. Bremister kissed her on both cheeks and followed her to her horse, asking God again and again to bless her till Myrnie wished the woman would keep her mouth shut and make less demonstration.

The girl took the Myer road in order to meet Don, and she met him in a buggy where the Browns Springs road forked off. The holy man was with him, but Don got out of the vehicle, leaving the priest uncertainly holding the horses; he walked along by Myrnie till he was beyond ear range of the buggy and without waiting to be asked, Myrnie told him what she had done.

He stood in silence, his eyes on the ground as she spoke and with his eyes still on the ground, he said,

“I would rather tell her the whole truth, make a clean breast of it,” now he looked full at her, “and go down to the ‘Y’ in Myer and turn around and take a new start in life.” It was evident that he still had hopes. Kate might refuse him if he did this.

The girl smiled and looked at him, shaking her head. There was all the old irresistible deviltry lurking in his eyes as he looked at her. He was still able to joke in the face of serious matters. This made him the same,

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dear old self to her, and she had to take her eyes away from him. Feigning disgust, she said,

"You must not change what I have done and told them, Don."

Now, he was all seriousness. "I will do whatever you say, as I promised you I would last night; still, this all seems so useless to me and I think I might just as well tell the truth. I believe the truth is always the best in any circumstance. We might just as well do as we had planned. Might just as well."

He did not know how hard he was making it for her to stay by her conviction of what was right. Don turned and looked down the road that led to Kate, then toward Browns Springs, and Myrnie saw something strange come into his face as he asked,

"Myrnie, is this where our paths divide?"

She looked at the diverging highways also, but could not speak at first, then he said:

"No, Don, this is not the place. There is but one place in this world where the paths of those who love or have loved turn asunder, and that is at the point of dishonor. Whether they be lover and sweetheart or husband and wife, and it matters not whether they separate or remain together, from the first moment when evil, deceit, or dishonor enters the heart of one in regard to the other, that is where their paths divide and must lie asunder forever."

"But you don't despise me, Myrnie?" His voice trembled.

"No, Don, I could not. I forgive you everything." Her voice shook as much as his own.

Don stepped to the side of her horse and taking the hand that hung limply by her side, drew it down to his

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face. He did not touch his lips to it, but she felt the hot tears falling on her palm.

Drawing her hand away hurriedly, lest she give up at the last moment, she said, "Good-bye, Don!" and striking Puss, galloped up the road toward Browns Springs, keeping the same gait all the way home. She called Becky Moore to her room and told her the same story she had told Kate.

Dear Becky wept constantly, telling Myrnie that they had all gone to search for her, thinking she was lost, and warning her that if she did not desist from such a saintly life, God would take her up from where she stood, and translate her into heaven at once, which must not happen, as this wicked world still had sore need of the angelic ministrations.

Myrnie had no tears to shed now. She had again passed beyond tears and seemed lifted above the things of this world. Hurt yourself and no one can hurt you. conquer yourself and no one can conquer you, crucify yourself and no power in this world can touch you.

By the mighty force of her will, the girl appeared natural, telling her friends that she was going to a visit to her old home in Nova Scotia and she would be so happy to meet her old friends and relatives again. She even went out to the barn and had a farewell romp on the hay with Becky's children because they wanted her to do so.

That evening she saw Don and the priest drive up to the barn, and going to the stable where Bob Moore was, get Puss. Myrnie ran upstairs in breathless fear of him and hid herself. She watched him breathlessly through a window. He was Kate's husband now. But,

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oh, God, how she loved him! How handsome he was in his free, easy movements!

After he had gone, she heard Bob telling Becky that Don and Kate had been married, and that old man Bremister was going to set Don up in breeding fine horses and had presented him the ranch on Cherry Creek.

"I congratulated Don on his rapid success," Bob chuckled. "Few men get along so fast on being first married, wife, kid and farm all at one clatter. Even you and I did not do that well, did we, old gal?" He came fooling around his wife and kissed her, which pleased Becky immensely, but this fact she would not acknowledge, and slapping her husband said:

"Oh, go long, you goose."

It was well for Myrnie that she was so entirely fatigued. She went to bed and slept soundly that night, and bright and early the next morning started for Prescott with Bob Moore.

## CHAPTER XIII.

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EARLY on Monday morning Grin started on his mission of peace. Now that school was closed, he left Seth Dailey with the sheep and, mounting, went to his employer first. He found Jim Bailey at his breakfast. The old man sat on a stool by a rough table seeming to greatly enjoy his meal of black coffee, bacon and frijoles. The surly fellow greeted Grin with:

"What in hell do you want now?"

"I am leavin' the sheep with Seth to-day, Bailey, as I have a mission of greater importance to perform."

"Maybe your mission is gettin' too damned important for this sheep herdin' business, anyway," Jim Bailey roared viciously.

Grin understood the man before him and said, "I have felt that way for sometime, but, Jim Bailey, did you ever know of my neglecting your business since I have been drawin' pay from you?"

"Damned if you ever did, Oliver. You are the only herder I have ever had who was worth his salt. But what is this rushin' business to-day?"

"I do not wish to tell you yet. But I want you to come to the Stronghold this evening at four o'clock. The meeting will be under the box-elder tree. Don't fail to be there, Bailey."

The elder man stared at his herder in alarm and inquiry. Grin let him stare, returning the gaze.

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"What in hell now?" Jim Bailey asked.

"Nothing in hell, something more like heaven," Grin replied soberly.

"After another spell of staring, Jim Bailey remarked, "Damned if I don't believe you are gettin' them crazy spells your old, fool mammy used to have."

But Grin left him with these words, "Better be there." He knew that he could count on this man; his superstition had been aroused.

Grin next stopped at Bob Moore's ranch. Here he expected a more difficult task. Bob Moore was a plain man and possessed that which we call "horse sense;" he was hard headed and devoid of superstition, being an honest man. Superstition find lodgement only in the ignorant or dishonest brain. Grin knew that he must appeal to something better than superstition to catch Bob Moore.

"Good mornin', Mr. Moore! fine day after the rain." Grin hailed.

"Yes, Grin, that rain was a Godsend to this country," Bob answered, not looking up from greasing his harness.

Grin was puzzled as to how he should proceed; but he broke out bravely.

"You are a peace-loving man, Bob Moore?"

Now Bob looked up in surprise, "Huh, I've tried to live in peace. Yes sir; peace is a favorite motto of mine, but I've found it pretty bouncin' hard sometimes to keep peace here with the kind of neighbors I've had."

"There is going to be a change, Bob. There is going to be peace."

"Why, what's up now, Grin?"



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"Can you be at the Stronghold at four o'clock this evening, Bob?"

"Guess not; I'm goin' to Myer to-day."

"But there is going to be a meetin' at the Stronghold this evening that is likely to be mighty interestin' as well as profitable to you. All your friends and all your enemies will be there and there will be a mighty readjustin' of this neighborhood's peace conditions. I am to officiate. No women nor kids allowed." And Grin left Bob chuckling, feeling sure, though he knew not why, that he could count on Bob Moore.

Bob left his harness at once and rushed to the house to tell Becky about this, for she was his good counselor in all things.

"What do you think Grin has got under his fool bonnet now?" he asked, as he came upon his family in the dining-room. Then he told them of Grin's visit and words. This set them all laughing, for the Moores were mirthful people.

"Yes, go," Becky urged, and Bob was beginning to feel inclined to do so. Such chances for fun like this came rarely in the neighborhood, and who liked fun better than Bob Moore?

"All right, guess I'll give up the Myer idea till to-morrow. Can't miss any such joke as that." And Bob went back to his harness chuckling and repeating, "I'm to officiate. No women nor kids allowed."

His two boys came running after him, yelling:

"Can I go, pop, can I go?"

"Naw," Bob replied, "No women nor kids allowed," and snorted.

By this time Grin had reached Eshler's place. He

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was at ease here, for he caught his fish with the first line cast.

"Eshler, there is goin' to be a meetin' at the Stronghold this evening at four o'clock, and if you will be there, you will have an opportunity to do more good to your fellowmen than you ever have done in all your life before. Mind, no women are allowed."

Our peacemaker knew that his friends, the loose cowboys in the country, were "busting" broncos at Sour-dough Wilson's corrals and there he betook himself next. As he rode up he saw John Alexander making ready to mount a young horse. The saddle was in place, the girth tightened, and Grin had seen the struggle that placed the bit between the pony's teeth. And now the prospective rider stood patting the horse's neck.

Grin drew rein and no one spoke to him, but he waited calmly, knowing that they had seen him and must speak to him in time, as he did not wish to appear too eager or too soon. Putting on a very careless air, he sat whistling at intervals a slow, easy tune.

"John," called out Sour-dough, "I'll bet you can't stick that horse. He's got a devil of a mean eye."

"Bet you bottom-dollar I can," John answered banteringly.

"Let's see you do it," Doc Manhart called out.

"If I can't, none of you fellers can; that's a cinch," John answered smiling, and with that he sprang into the saddle so quickly that the colt did not know what was happening to him. The animal squatted and humped himself a little but gave no further evidence of being vicious.

"What do you want to bet, Sour-dough, that I can't

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stick him?" John asked, springing up and down in the saddle to let the horse know that he was there.

"Don't care to bet anything now, John, changed my mind."

"Don't crawfish on us now, Sour-dough, stay game." Doc Manhart urged.

"Bet him yourself, Doc," put in Will Collins.

"I'll bet him all right," Doc answered. "I'll bet him a ten."

"I take your bet," said John, and again he commenced to spring as though the horse's back were a spring-board. The poor creature did not seem to know what to do. It straddled about, chewing its bit and almost sitting down on its haunches.

"Hit him on the end," cried Silvertip, handing John a quirt, whereupon John commenced to strike the horse lightly across the hips.

It started forward, made for the group of cowboys, its ears back, biting at them, its glassy eyes flashing "old Harry." It was a buckskin cayuse and had, as these fellows expressed it, "a blaze in its face." It was a typical Western pony of the true bronco breed, and those who understand the nature of these beasts, know how little one can depend on them.

At this venture of the bronco, the boys ran in many directions, and Grin yelled loudly, enjoying the fun at their expense. The cowboys heard Grin's laugh, but still they pretended not to notice him.

The horse now stood stubbornly still, looking sullen.

"Hit him again," urged the Three-cornered Kid, and John obeyed. The colt began to plunge, holding its head down between its knees. John went limp like a rag, but stayed in the saddle.

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"Bravo, *caramba!*" shouted Mexican Charley. "*Muy bonito caballo, muy bonito,*" as the colt went plunging around the corral, standing first on one end, it appeared, then on the other.

"Hold up his head," the Korkonian shouted, and this would have been the proper thing to do, but it was easier said than done, once the horse got his head down. At times the buckskin would stop, and holding his nose against one hoof, would paw and beat the ground with the other, bellowing like a calf, then away it went, bucking for five minutes without a stop. All this time John flopped about limberly, his head snapping on the end of his long neck as though it would fly off, but he always came down in the saddle, his feet in the stirrups and his long legs hooked under. At the next stop, John was able to draw the horse's head up, and keeping it up, struck him again. It now trotted round and round, whinnying cheerfully to its mates in a nearby corral as if to say, "Why did they not tell me they wanted me to do this before?"

Now everybody cheered, Grin louder than the rest, for John had won the ten and would have to treat, and Doc had lost.

Doc felt a little beaten, and to relieve his feelings, turned and shouted,

"Hello, Grin, you living fool, you!"

"Hello, you damned self. A living fool is better off than a dead one. I could have told you that horse could have been ridden," Grin retorted.

"What can a nanny-goat chambermaid know about horses, I'd like to know?" Doc threw back at him. "What in hell brought you here? Go back to your nannies."

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"You'll know soon enough what in hell I am here for," was Grin's rapid-fire reply.

Everyone now turned and looked at Grin, but he only sat trying to untie a hard knot in his rope, as though he were bent on that task alone.

"Go ahead then, idiot; out with it," Doc demanded.

"I don't care what kind of names you call me, Doc, but I got something to say to you fellers that I cal'late is goin' to be mighty interestin' to you before the thing is done with."

"Tell us about it, Grin," said the Terror of Dublin. "This is a time for good news."

"Speak, good shepherd, I beseech thee," Silvertip added.

"Ba—a—a!" Doc called out, in such exact imitation of a lamb's bleat that Mexican Charley looked around to see where the sheep was.

Grin had untied his knot now and sitting up importantly, began,

"Boys, its one of the things I've laid in the night and dreamed about."

Doc cut him short with, "Grin, you better look out, or you will hatch out some of them things you've been layin' in the night all these years and they will cause you some trouble."

But Grin paid no heed to this and went on:

"Boys, where have our saddles, our shaps, our bridles, and even our animals gone in the last three years? Boys, you've blamed Jim Bailey for these things, him and his crowd, and they have blamed you for his losses. You have been enemies and carried your guns when no enmity should have existed among you, for none of you have been to blame. There is a mystery

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about all this and I alone have the key that unlocks the door of the mystery. Will you have that door unlocked? Then meet me at the Stronghold at four this evening. I can restore to you your stolen goods." Grin paused.

Everyone stood spell-bound. Was this not the subject on which they thought most strongly?

"Are you right sure you are not crazy, Grin?" Will Collins asked, rather pityingly.

"As God hears me," Grin poured forth, standing up in his stirrups, holding up his hands and gazing heavenward, "I am not follerin' in my old mother's steps and I am no lyin'." Grin turned and galloped away, leaving the hammerheads looking after him in bewilderment.

"What in Sam Hill?" asked one, and, "The poor fool is crazy," from another, and they stood about looking foolish.

"What about this, Charley? You are one of the Bailey faction?"

"Yo no se, yo no se nada," the Mexican said, shrugging his shoulders in the typically Mexican way, very much alarmed.

"Do you think there is anything in what Grin says?" asked Will Collins, looking around at his companions.

"No, he's bug-house," Doc said.

"I do not think he is. There must be something doing a little out of the general run of things at the Stronghold. If he is playing us a fool trick, it would be the first time for him when he pretends to be serious. I just think I will go over this evening and see what is going on. Grin is not always all bad, and he is all right in his place."

"Yes," said Doc, "he is all right in his place, but his place burned down."

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"Let's see," pondered Sour-dough, looking at the sun; "it's about noon now. Come down to the house, all of you, and I will help mother get some dinner. I churned about five gallons of buttermilk this morning. Besides, we got a lot of fresh eggs on hand. Like egg sandwiches, boys? We can have dinner and rest awhile and all go over in a bunch."

No one making any objection to this, they all mounted and galloped down to Aunt Sally's, swinging their hats and yelling, a double picnic in store for them,—first the buttermilk, second the excitement expected at the Stronghold.

After the meal they felt better than ever, all except Mexican Charley, who had drunk so much buttermilk as to be almost helpless with stomach ache. He doubled up and groaned, '*Yo estoy muy mala,*' but when the cowboys rode away from the Wilson ranch, Charley followed in the rear.

Along the dusty road they swept like desperadoes. When they passed Lucy Morgan's house, Lucy's washing hung on the line, the most conspicuous garments of which were Lucy's home-made underwear. These were made of unbleached muslin, were extremely long and slim in the legs, with skimpy little ruffles of the same at the bottoms, and looked especially ludicrous as the wind filled them and tossed them about. As the cowboys passed this array, John Alexander, who rode in the lead, tipped his hat at Lucy's washing with this remark, "I always pay my respects to such as those whenever I see them."

Then on like the wind they swept, and soon reached the Stronghold. All those whom Grin had summoned, the whole neighborhood of men, were there. They

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rested in the shade of the box-elder tree, but where was Grin? He was not among the number. As may be imagined, these men were not at ease; here they were, friends and enemies together and they did not know for what purpose they had been called there. Still, there was the feeling among them that this gathering was for the purpose of healing their neighborhood sore. But no one could find a word to say and some sat while others stood about waiting and thinking deeply, their embarrassment increasing.

At length Bob Moore drolled sheepishly, "I wonder where Grin is."

At this everybody laughed, and the ice being broken Eshler put in,

"I had a deuce of a time keeping Lucy from coming here with me, but Grin's orders were, 'No women allowed,' but I have a feeling that she followed me, and is skulking in ambush about here now."

This was followed by another roar of laughter, but this time it was cut short abruptly. The tree round which they sat stood directly in front of a cave, and from that depth of darkness, a light was seen coming toward them.

"Ghosts, by hemlocks!" shouted Jim Bailey.

Mexican Charley started to run, but Grin soon stood before them with an armful of candles. He looked about at everyone, and bowed profoundly, squinting his small eyes from too much light. Without uttering a word he commenced to pass the candles around, giving one to each man.

"Ladies and gents, this is a most solemn occasion," Doc Manhart tried to say mockingly, but his voice hitched several times.



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"Going to usher us into the bowels of the unknown?" Bob Moore asked.

"Any snakes in there, Grin?" was John Alexander's question.

But Grin only waved his hand mysteriously and said, "Follow me," leading the way into the cave. All followed, John Alexander at Grin's heels and Jim Bailey in the extreme rear. Mexican Charley came back, but he would not go inside the cave; he stood under the box-elder and waited, ready to bolt any minute if anything happened.

When the whole number was inside the cavern, there was plenty of light, every corner being brought out of its blackness. The men stood looking first at Grin, then at the canvas covered heaps on the ground. Grin allowed them to stare with no explanation till Bob Moore muttered,

"My God, what does this mean?"

Then giving his candle to the man next to him, he drew the canvas sheets away, revealing the numerous articles arranged in neat order as he had placed them on the previous day.

Men catching their breath could be heard swearing as they recognized their own property.

"My old saddle, my new saddle, my three saddles," said Sour-dough and pounced upon a pile of things near him.

Then the cave's walls commenced to echo and re-echo the curses, the laughter and the oaths as each man fell busy sorting his own goods. For many minutes they were thus occupied, then Will Collins spoke:

"Grin, you will have to explain this."

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"That's what you will," and "I say so too," from others.

"I can explain it all easily," Grin told them. "Not a man here has had anything to do with this. You have blamed each other and hated each other, now behold your folly. And now gentlemen, before I explain further, I think it is time for you to shake hands, to show your good faith in each other."

This they all did, and they seemed to feel it deeply. Grin almost had his hand wrung off by some of them and when they had all done, Grin began to speak again,

"A man dwelling apart from among us has done this, and all for the fun of seeing us hate each other and fight it out. It has been his one amusement for the past three years," Grin was eloquent and stood using his hands gracefully, "But now that man has turned over a new leaf and wishes to see peace among you, he wishes to be forgiven. He has entrusted me with the great privilege of restoring peace among you. He wishes to reform, he has reformed."

"We will give him reform, when we get hold of him," Jim Bailey growled between his teeth, as he stood clutching his sheep hides. Several others swore their revenge, but Grin said:

"I will not tell you who he is unless you promise not to molest him. He has been a benefactor to you, having collected your wealth and kept it for you, besides teaching you a great lesson. It has always been his intention to at sometime return these things to you, for he says he had no use for them."

"We have our own ideas about that, and we know who he is," said one. "It appears that he has had other amusement beside this in the past year," said another.

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"Come, let us find him." And they fled out of the cave, leaving their goods behind them until a better time in which to take them home.

When they reached the open air, they beheld a ghastly face against the body of the box-elder. Don Gray stood with arms folded across his chest, his back against the tree. I think he wanted them to string him up then and there, but they backed away from him. The look in his face, the awful drawn pallor, the haunting of his eyes, was too much for them.

Mexican Charley had fled again, and Jim Bailey spoke in a hoarse whisper, "God, it's his ghost."

But Don said, "If you want me, here I am."

"We don't want you, Don," Eshler spoke.

"Go home to your wife and baby," was Bob's counsel, whispered in his ear.

"You've been our banker, Don, we owe you gratitude," John Alexander added, laughing.

The hammerheads went back into the cave and got much of their goods after which they departed for home. Don had vanished, but Grin still remained, and climbing to the highest point of the rocks, stood singing from Psalms, fairly beside himself with sheer glory. They tried to coax him down, being afraid he would fall, for he seemed uncertain of his muscles like a drunken man, but no one could influence him. The last man who left the place saw him on the topmost pinnacle, singing to a tune of his own improvising, "I will hear what the Lord will speak; for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints. But let them not turn again to folly. I will lay me down in peace to sleep, for thou, God, makest me to dwell in safety."

Someone among the homing party said that this af-

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fair called for a jubilee and a dance; and a dance they all declared they would have before they separated at the cross roads. Each person was to come just as he was found dressed, or not at all, when the invitation came to him or her. When they returned to the hall that night, they were a motley array. I would not care to describe the costume of Aunt Sally, and Lucy Morgan looked none too well, having washed that day. But a dance they had, the like of which Eshler's Hall never saw before nor since. Someone got a fiddle and commenced to play, and Browns Springs swooped in like a whirlwind in a cornfield, picking up the dry husks, and when they were all set and going it was like the whirl in full force. Round and round they swung, men, women, and little children, singing the song to which they danced—"Pretty little men in sandyland, picking up potatoes as fast as they can." Those who could not enter the ring for want of room, stood by and clapped their hands and sang till the din was deafening. They kept it up all night, Jim Bailey seeming to be the leader in everything. About midnight the wagon which had been sent to Myer came thundering up, and there were things to eat and things to drink but the dancers took no time for a well laid supper—they ate between times.

Grin was not among the dancers and everybody wanted him. At different times during the night, cowboys had gone from place to place, seeking him, but up to three o'clock in the morning he had not been located.

"I'll find him," said John Alexander, and departed forthwith. He returned a half later with the startling news that he had found Grin at the Stronghold—dead! Bruised and mangled at the foot of a cliff he lay, where he had fallen from the high rock above. The music

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was hushed, the dance came to an end. Everybody was in deep sorrow and set out on foot for the Stronghold, muttering to themselves Grin's virtues. And there on the rocks they found him, his innocent face wreathed in smiles of heavenly peace. The pale moon threw its tranquil light on him, kissing him gently as he lay dead.

The mourners looked upon him in awe, men in silence, women and children in tears. There he lay, a philosopher, a virgin and a fool, wrapped in a glory that few who visit this earth have known. They took him up tenderly and carried him to Becky's, the place he would want to go.

The funeral was held next day, Eshler Morgan conducting the services, and he was laid in a lonely place, under broad-spreading trees. That was the mortal end of Grin. But the people of that section speak of him often to this day, and laugh at the pranks he played.

## CHAPTER XIV.

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UPON reaching Prescott, Myrnie secured lodgings among strangers, not wishing to meet the prying eyes and questions of acquaintances. She stayed in her room, meaning to rest for awhile, then to lay some plan for future action. But no desire for future existence came to her. Her life among the affairs of men seemed at an end, absolutely. Any thought of returning to the home of her childhood, where she had dwelt in innocent ignorance of the tragedies which had befallen her, among indifferent relatives who could not understand, was unbearable, much as she loved the memory of that tranquil life. She felt that she must go to some new place and start life over again, and she bitterly remembered Don's last words. "Go down to the 'Y', turn around, and take a new start in life."

But where, from what nucleus could any new life spring for her? The wells of interest in this life were dry, and the sun could shine no more. And as a consequence, no plan came to her mind. She had no wish to plan; she only wished to look backward, to relive the months of her past, and this she did, over and over and over, night and day, morning, noon, evening, night. She could not regret her action in anything; she could only lament the outcome. She knew firmer and clearer than ever that, ultimately, she had acted in the one way that was right. Sometimes this thought came to her

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and comforted her, lifting her soul to its spiritual heights, and she felt that some noble purpose must come to her and lift her up, and in its accomplishment she should be rewarded and able to live again. But, following immediately upon the heels of this inspiration, came such an immersion into the depths of despair as she thought would crush all life from her, and she often gave up to it in this wise; "What shall I do, what shall I do? What is this that has come to me? O, God, have I so sinned that I must suffer thus? Let me go mad; let me lose consciousness; let me die, only take from my heart this pain." Then she would struggle and try to bear it bravely, believing it cowardly to thus be mastered by earthly circumstances. Then she prayed, having been taught that God was a helper in every need. But no repentance came to her, and for days and days she thus struggled with herself.

There were times when she had all she could do to keep from going to Don and lie in hiding to watch and worship him in silence. She must see him at any cost. She did go so far one day as to buy a ticket for Myer, but the next minute she came to her better senses, and she tore the ticket up and went back to her room to sit alone.

She often and in many ways made attempts to throw off this burden, and not be crushed and strangled by it. Sometimes she went out to climb a mountain, but if she succeeded in reaching the summit, the infinite view of space which she gained from this elevated point increased her sense of loneliness and desolation of heart, and the result was that she always sat down and cried a long time before making the descent. Oftener she gave up before she was half way up the hill, and said,

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"What is the use?" And, turning around, went back to sit in the room again—the dreary four walls of the plain room with the common wall-paper, every figure of which the girl had counted, this way and that, as they stretched across the room in every direction. She knew every rent in the curtains, and the stains on the ceiling where the rain had come through, the dull carpet and the pictures on the wall.

Once she went to call on some acquaintances, but the aimlessness of their conversation bored her, and as they sat commenting on their own affairs, their words sounded dimly in her ears as though they were not for her, and when she returned to her room, its quiet, which had so often distressed her, seemed a delightful refuge against the uninteresting outside world. So after all these attempts failed, she stayed at home. She could not endure the sound of her violin now. Its voice seemed like the wailing of her own soul, and therefore she was compelled to leave it untouched. She sometimes sewed in her room, and this was the one occupation that brought her any comfort. Thus employed she could sit and stitch and stitch, and think and think. If she tried to write, only morbid sentiments came from her pen, laments and complaints against the all-wise arrangements of things, and knowing that these were useless, all her literary efforts went into the waste basket. Much of her time was spent looking out of the window at the landscape thus framed for her. It was always the same with few signs of life to change its monotony, but the trees and the brown hills within the frame did not become tiresome. Perhaps a bird alighted on the branches of the tree outside her window, or hopped about on the grass seeking the insects that hid there, and



its movements took her attention while it lingered, and when it flew away she waited for another bird to come. She wondered if these birds suffered the loss of their mates ever, and said to them, "Bless your little heart, come and tell me all about it and I can sympathize with you."

As the days wore on she grew more used to her sorrow. Her face came to wear less of pain and more of resigned sadness. The expression in her clear spiritual eyes went to the hearts of those who chanced to look into them. Her landlady knew that some great grief tore the soul behind those eyes, but felt that it was too deep a sorrow for her to interfere with. She only smiled tenderly or touched Myrnie gently and caressingly when she came near her, and Myrnie understood these expressions of sympathy and was grateful.

When Fred Harmon came to town and sought her, taking her by surprise as he always did, she almost ran into his arms before she could check herself, for he now, of all the world, seemed a benefactor to her. And until she saw him now, she had ceased to remember his existence; he had not been in her thoughts since the night of the flood, and at this unexpected meeting she ran toward him out of the reflex memory of an old impulse.

"Myrnie," he exclaimed, and came eagerly forward to meet her, but drew back in subdued wonder at the look in her eyes when she stopped and held up her hands before her in a protecting way, trembling.

"Do not touch me, Fred, please, till I have told you, then you will hate me."

But he paid no heed to this. This was his Myrnie, his beloved, the one for whom he had planned so long, the one to whom he had come home with so much joy

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and expectation after ten months of hard struggle in the financial whirls of the East, and he had succeeded. This was his Myrnie in flesh and blood, and could anything keep her from him? He adored her, no matter what she had to tell him.

He took her in his arms in spite of her efforts to stop him, and kissed her as he had thought to do thousands of times, and she came out of it crying.

"Is this my welcome after so much expectation, little Myrnie? This is the reason you have not written to me for so long. But come, tell me, I can comprehend anything and shall not blame you, child."

She suffered herself to be led to a window seat, and there, sitting beside him, her hands clasping and unclasping (but this was her only sign of agitation), she told him her whole story unflinchingly, adding that she loved him as a kind and good friend, and had tenderness and sympathy in her heart for him, but not that great love which she had known for Don Gray.

Fred was very uneasy during her story, sad and crest-fallen until he found that Don was lost to her, then all seemed clear to him.

"I shall not mind him at all, Myrnie, and I know that you will forget him in a short time. You love me now next best. I shall be satisfied with the love you have for me till I can win all your love. You are too young yet to love anyone very deeply. That great love must come later. I want you to become my wife just as we have planned it, and I will be so good to you that the great love of your developed womanhood, as your years come on, will be for me. I know it. Do you not think so, Myrnie?"

"Maybe," she said, smiling sadly.

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He used long arguments with her, wringing affirmatives from her, and told her that only the isolation of the cattle country had caused her to imagine an affection for this unworthy fellow. Myrnie listened patiently to all this, and did not dispute him, but in her heart of hearts she knew better.

It would seem that Fred Harmon's past experience would warn him against a marriage for anyone where love, first of all, did not exist, but he was so blinded by his own great love that everything seemed possible to him.

"Just you wait till I show you what I brought you from New York," he told her, and took her to his apartments to verify his assertion. She expected him to produce a jewelry case, but what was her surprise when she saw him pull two large trunks from the wall with these words:

"These are all for you."

And when the trunks were thrown open, how large her eyes grew. In the top till of the first trunk were two hats, one for dress and one for travel. Myrnie wondered what they had cost; they looked so rich and smart. Then, wonder of wonders, down into the trunk he delved. There was a complete trousseau, and of the finest. Dresses and gowns the like of which Myrnie had never seen before, everything she could need and much more, it seemed to her. Fred was not unaccustomed to buying ladies' apparel.

During the unpacking the girl had stood braced against the wall, her hands spread out on the wall paper, and saying almost nothing; only smothered "Ahs," and "Ohs," came from her, but how swiftly the thoughts flew through her brain. Fred was fully enjoying her

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surprise and delight. After everything was displayed and some of the things tried on, and when she heard fully how he had gone to milliners and modistes of the best and had described her minutely to them, she understood why everything suited and became her so well.

"Fred, do you not remember once, when you said I was Cinderella, I told you yes, only I had no fairy godmother; now you are my godmother."

"Yes, don't I look motherly?" and he hugged himself and danced about on one foot, "But this is not all," he continued.

And now the jewelry cases were brought out. Myrnie had never worn jewelry or thought that she cared for it particularly, but what was this? What woman could stand by and see these cases opened and show no emotion?

When all had been displayed, she looked at Fred earnestly and a long time, thinking how he must have thought of her constantly to have done all this for her. She wished she could love this man, and as she sat looking at him, she determined to try. A love like this was priceless, she told herself.

"I am afraid this is not true. Maybe it is only a dream and I shall wake from it," she said, smiling.

"But I can make you realize that it is not a dream," and he pinched her cheek so hard that he heard from her. He pulled a lock of her hair till he heard from her again, but this time it was her sweet laughter with its old-time ring that affirmed her belief in the reality of her surroundings.

He told her to employ a dressmaker to fit the dresses to her, and that after a week they would be quietly married and start on a tour of Europe to be gone for a

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year, would stop in Nova Scotia first, and, if she demanded it of him, he would dwell on one side of the Gut of Canso and she on the other, and he would swim over every day to see her in a secret trysting place among the rocks. Over all this they laughed gaily, but she told him she could not consent to this without a great deal of thought. And he left her for a few days in which she was to think. At first it seemed impossible to her but later the matter presented itself in a different form. She reasoned that she could never really love any man but Don; he was lost, lost to her forever. And comprehending Fred's great love for her, she thought that the best purpose to which she could put her life was in making him happy in payment for what he could do for her. She would try to love him and would never deceive him. She explained all this to him, and he was satisfied and she felt justified.

The next morning, when Fred came, she met him at her door, saying, "Let me look at you, Fred—I really have not looked at you since you came home," and he smiled and stepped about quickly, making sport of her desire to inspect him when in truth he was very much pleased.

How really fine he was, large and strong and handsome in his perfectly mature manhood. His past months of rubbing against the real business world and his own success in it gave him that air of a thorough man of the world. The Arizona tan had gone from his face, and in its place was the clearness of Eastern eye and complexion. His clothes, too, were of a different cut from the prevalent Arizona style, which is generally at least two years behind.

"How handsome you have grown!" she kindly re-

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marked, and this made him so happy that he was compelled to demonstrate his feelings.

In a week more they were married and gone. And this was Myrnie's marriage, so different from what she thought it would be. She did not forget her love for Don Gray at once. She had that to struggle with for a long time at intervals, but she afterwards came to know that her love for Don had been but the love of the body, as the first love often is, and not that great love of the inward soul of which her nature was capable.

Memory of the hammerheads came to Myrnie long afterwards and in many places. Perhaps it was in Paris, in Italy, or in Rome of an evening when she sat alone and she would have given her present all for a mere sight of the sage brush, for the sounds of a corralled herd, or for a glimpse of the desert far away in that lotus land of charm. The image of Don mingled dimly with it all and made the memory hallowed. But Time is our great healer, and though we may never forget the heart's deep wounds, there comes a day when they do not smart.

But I know of another marriage of Myrnie's in after years which was altogether different from this first one, but I shall not tell you of that now. I love my Myrnie too much to drag her through all that at this time. If you wish to know about it, you will have to tell me; then, after a little rest, I will unfold the story to you.

## AFTERTHOUGHT.

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SOME, no doubt, who read this story will condemn Myrnie because she married one man while loving another. Be honest with yourself; do you think there are many women who under the same circumstances would have done otherwise? Don, who was unworthy of her, was lost to her. What other path was left open to her? Europe! Had that not always been her dream?

I have a friend, a whimsical bachelor, and he has not made a fortune, and he tries to hint to me (but I will not let him) that this is the reason that no woman would ever marry him. He is mistaken. Many of the best women in the world marry poor men.

Now my friend, the bachelor, has no way with women. He does not know how to say nice things to them, does not understand "small talk." He is really bashful in the presence of women, and, I must say, a little afraid. He is profound and serious, and he would not tell a little "white lie" to please any woman.

He and I discuss these questions with pleasure and gusto and perhaps some profit, but he is always cynical on this one point. When we read the "Little Minister" together, he accused Margaret of discarding the dominie and taking Adam Dishart back because of the bag of gold which Adam threw on the table. Again, when we read "The Virginian," he said that Molly Wood would never have hesitated about accepting the Virginian from the first if he had been a rich man. Upon both occasions we quarreled.

If men's and women's places were reversed in this world, I wonder would a man never consider a woman's bank account before accepting her? I suppose not.

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Have you never heard of a man who married a woman for her money? No?

I have a very strong notion that my friend, the bachelor, would like to marry a wealthy widow of whom I know. I support Myrnie in her action, but I am sure to have a tiff with my friend the whimsical bachelor when he has read this story. He will come to call me to account for these last few pages, for he will know of whom I refer herein. I am ready for him.

Perhaps some will wish to know how Don and Kate fared on the horse ranch. I can say that Kate has always been a happy woman. Her first-born was called Don, and grew to be a lover of horses, but this is not the only child she has borne her husband. One little girl was called Myrnie, and this little girl was her father's favorite child. She grew to love books and music.

Don Gray's married life was not altogether an unhappy one after the first year, though on the first night, they tell me, he mounted his black mare, Fashion, which he loved next to his own life, and galloped from place to place all night long; now to the Stronghold where he met his beloved more times than this story makes record of, now up hill down hill, anywhere and back to the Stronghold, till the poor creature dropped down dead under him. John Alexander found them the next morning not so far from the Stronghold, where Don lay asleep, his head pillowed on the neck of his lifeless horse.

Don became a prosperous man but never a good one. Kate's love, while it satisfied him in a way, did not purge his soul to cleanliness. There were times when the old, restless fever came over him, the old desire for double-dealing, and he "rustled" a calf to satisfy this feeling and as usual was never caught. And thus we leave him.





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